福本伸行

AKAGI ● Nobuyuki Fukumoto

Kindai Mahjong Comics

第6巻

Kindai mahjong Comics

闇に降り立った天才

逆理の闘牌 6

福本伸行

TAKE SHOBO

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闇に降り立った天才

近代麻雀コミックス ● 竹書房

福本伸行

アカギ

第6巻

漆黒の暗闇から鉄豹は
絶叫を轟く叫びを上げる。
髪は逆立ち、肌は粟立ち
全身から汗を噴かん
ばかりに殺気立つ。
その燃え立つがたまりを
冷ややかに見つめる目があった。——彼の名はアカギ。
後に神城の男と称され、裏社会に君臨した男——その[illegible]だった。

アカギ

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AKAGI ● Nobuyuki Fukumoto
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アカギ 逆理の闘牌 ⑥

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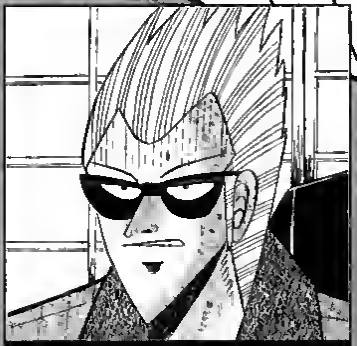
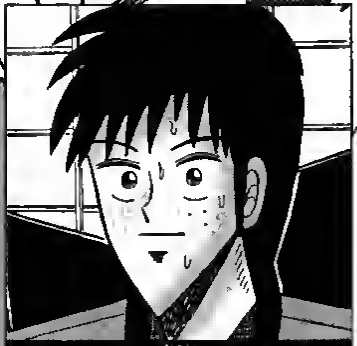
● TAKE SHOBO ●

赤木しげる



ニセアカギ

現在は川田組の代打ち。並外れた記憶力と雀力を持つ。詳細は不明。



治

アカギと同じ工場で働いていた少年。アカギに憧れ込み、ついてきた。

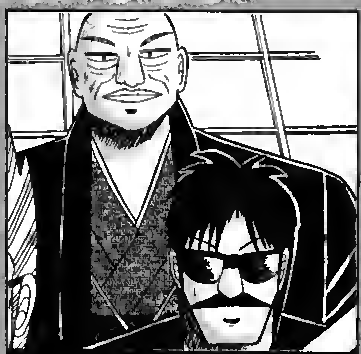
登場人物紹介

前巻までのあらすじ

昭和33年。生命を賭けたヤクザとの麻雀勝負に敗れつつあった南郷を助けた13歳の少年。彼こそ後に裏の麻雀界に君臨することになる赤木しげるであった。特に、盲目の雀士・市川を破った夜は、伝説と化した。しかし、直後に赤木は姿を消し、5年余りが経った…。昭和39年。川田組長は、不良刑事・安岡が売り込んだニセアカギと本物の赤木の対決を画策するが、対局途中であったニセアカギと藤沢組代打ち・浦部の勝負を一瞥した赤木は、浦部の方が格上だと言い放つ。果たして、予言通り浦部は、どちらかがトップをとるまで終わらない倍プッシュ勝負へと強引に持ち込んだ。ニセアカギを見限った川田組長は、赤木に代打ちを依頼。東場を治に打たせ、卓についた赤木だが、点差はまだ22500点…！

浦　部

藤沢組の代打ち。凡庸を装って倍プッシュ勝負を画策したベテラン。



川田組長(左)と石川

石川は伝説の夜に居合わせた一人。ニセアカギの真贋の判定もした。

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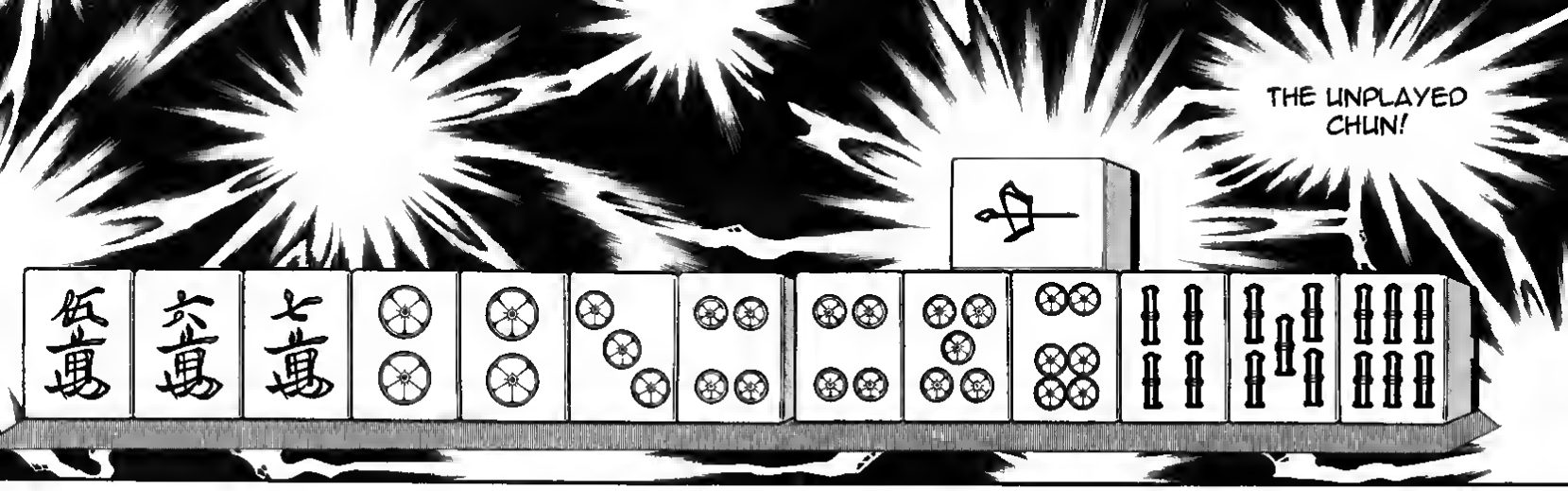
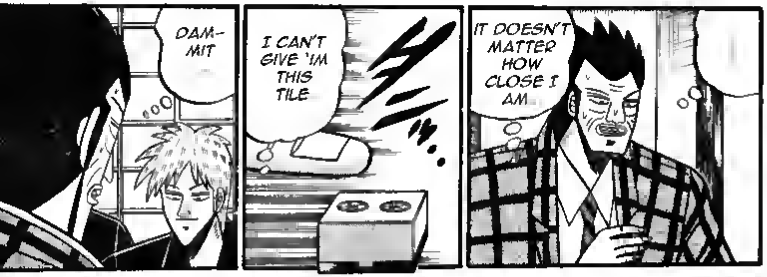
CHAPTER 46 - CROSSROADS

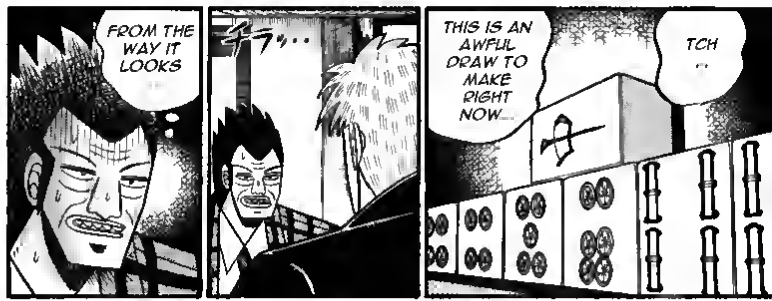
第46話 岐路

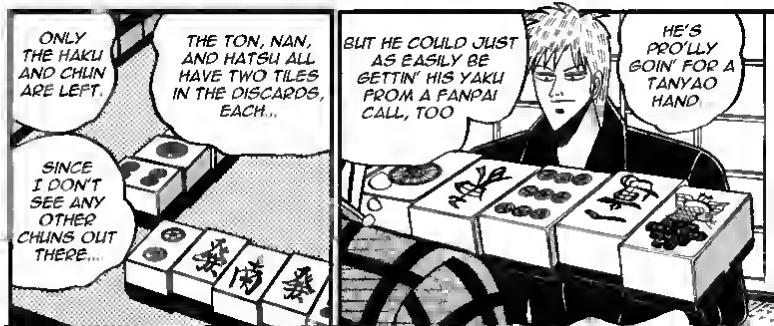
AKAGI VERSUS URABE
IF HE CAN BUMP THIS UP TO A HANEMAN TSUMO...
THAT'D BE A COME-BACK, TOO
AND EVEN WORSE, EVEN IF I CAN AVOID GIVIN' 'IM A DIRECT HIT...
IF I DEAL INTO HIS HAND AS IT IS NOW, HE'LL TAKE ALL OF IT BACK
IT'D BE A COME-BACK
EVEN THOUGH I'M IN THE LEAD AS FAR AS POINTS GO, THIS 25,500 POINT DIFFERENCE MEANS
URGH...!
DAM-MIT
AND I WAS QUICKLY PUTTIN' TOGETHER A TANYAO-ONLY HAND...
THIS IS THE LAST ROUND
WITH JUST THAT IN HIS HAND, HE ALREADY HAS A MANGAN...
IF HE TAKES IT ALL THE WAY, IT'LL BE A DEALER MANGAN, 12,000 POINTS...
YOU'VE GOTTA BE SHITTIN' ME...
HE'S AT DORA 4...!
BUT THEN HE MAKES THIS CLOSED KAN OF THE NEW DORA
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS


THE UNPLAYED CHUN!


DAM-MIT
I CAN'T GIVE 'IM THIS TILE
IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW CLOSE I AM...

WHAT'S THAT? IT PASSES ?
HUH ...!?
AKAGI DRAWS AND DISCARDS A CHUN!
BUT, AT THE START OF THE NEXT TURN...
THAT RIGHT ... GOOD, GOOD!


FROM THE WAY IT LOOKS
THIS IS AN AWFUL DRAW TO MAKE RIGHT NOW...
TCH ..


ONLY THE HAKU AND CHUN ARE LEFT.
THE TON, NAN, AND HATSU ALL HAVE TWO TILES IN THE DISCARDS, EACH...
SINCE I DON'T SEE ANY OTHER CHUNS OUT THERE...
BUT HE COULD JUST AS EASILY BE GETTIN' HIS YAKU FROM A FANPAI CALL, TOO
HE'S PRO'LLY GOIN' FOR A TANYAO HAND

STRAIGHT FROM THE GRAVE, ALL IN ONE TURN!
NOW, IF I DRAW ANY KIND OF TAN YAO TILE, MY HAND'LL BE BROUGHT BACK!
IT WAS A GREAT HELP!
HIM PLAYIN' THE CHUN JUST NOW SAVED ME...
THAT MEANS I'M SAFE...!
GH..!!
URGH..!
RIGHT TO A TANYAO TENPAI!
I DRAW THE HAKU, OF ALL THINGS?!
WHAT THE HELL IS GOIN' ON, HERE?!
WHAT A SHITTY FLOW
DAM-MIT...

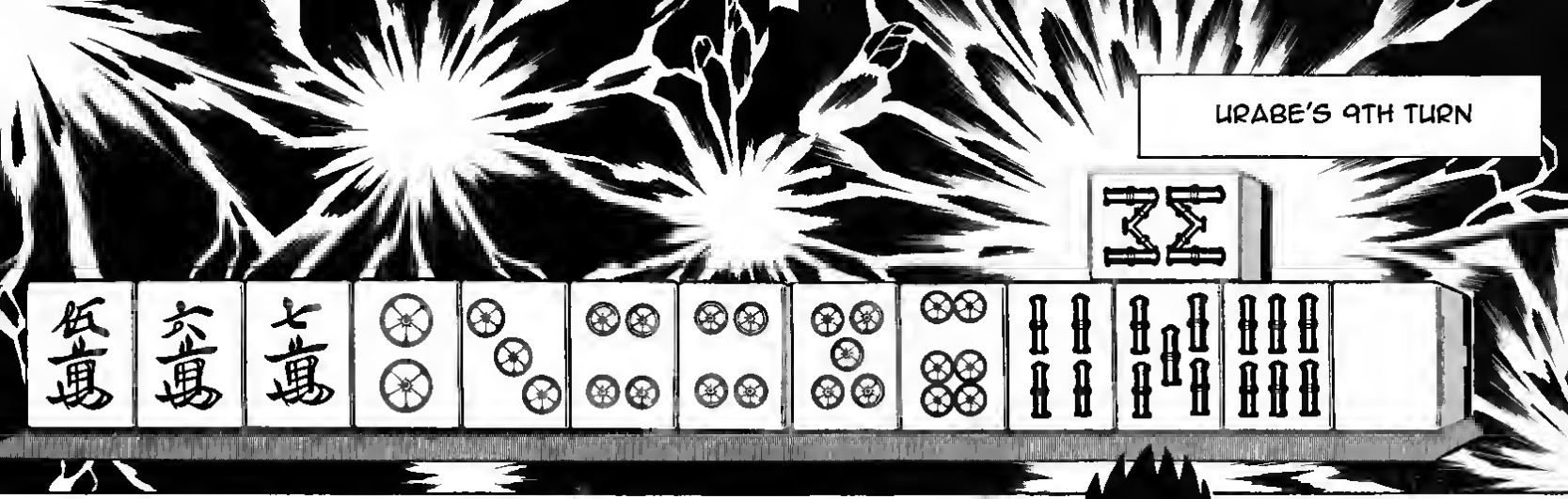
I DOUBT I'LL BE ABLE TO GET THIS HAKU I NEED, BUT IT CAN'T BE HELPED.
WELL...
WITH A HAKU SINGLE WAIT
THANKS TO THIS HONOR TILE, HIS HAND CAN NOW ONLY GET MENZEN TSUMO FOR YAKU.
NOW, URAGE CANNOT WIN BY ANYTHING OTHER THAN TSUMO.
IF HE CAN TSUMO NOW, IT'LL ALL BE OVER.
AT ANY RATE...
HE'S GOT THE 6-MAN WORKED INTO HIS HAND, TOO.
HE'S SURE TO HAVE ONE.
AND SINCE THE ORIGINAL DORA WAS THE 6-MAN.
HE'S ALREADY GOT A DORA 4 HAND.
AT THIS TIME...
I WON'T BE GIVEN ANY SECOND CHANCES!
THERE'LL BE NO WAY FOR ME TO ESCAPE!
IF HE MANAGES TO TSUMO, IT'LL BE ALL OVER FOR ME!
NO PLACE TO RUN!
IF THAT'S RIGHT, HE'S GOT TANYAO, DORA 5... OR EVEN FANPAI, DORA 5.
A HANEMAN HAND.

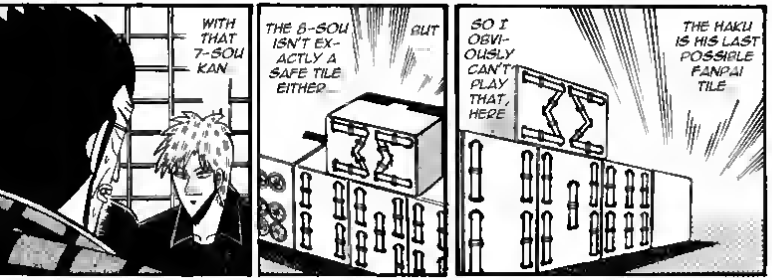
BUT, ON THE VERY NEXT ROUND...
THAT VERY SITUATION IS FLIPPED AROUND ON ITS HEAD!
IT WOULD BE ABNORMAL FOR HIM NOT TO BE, GIVEN THE SITUATION
URABE IS STILL TOTALLY ON THE DEFENSIVE...
THE EIGHTH TURN
AKAGI'S CHANCE TO CALL
HE USES UP THE 2-3-4 MAN...
CHI!
THE 6-MAN, THE DORA THAT URABE SO FEARED!
AND PLAYS THE 6-MAN!

THE DORA IS
ざわ..
SO, THEN, IS IT TANYAO
HE'S IN TENPAI NOW, FOR SURE
OR IS IT FANPAI ?
THAT MADE IT CERTAIN
SO THAT DORA, THEN
HE'S MADE TWO CALLS
THAT MAKES THREE OF THE DORA TILES ACCOUNTED FOR
WITH THOSE DISCARDS AND THE 6-MAN ALREADY IN MY HAND
SO, THEN, THE FINAL DORA
THEN THAT MAKES THREE ...
THE SOUTH PLAYER FOLLOWS SUIT AND DEALS HIS OWN 6-MAN
SEEING THAT AKAGI DEALT THE DORA, 6-MAN...

GOD DAMMIT ...!!
...HAS GOT TO BE IN HIS HAND.
WHA-?!

NOW I KNOW WHERE ALL OF THE DORA TILES ARE...
WHAT AN OUT-COME...
NOW THAT I DO, THERE'S NO CHANCE FOR HIM TO HAVE 5 DORA IN HIS HAND.
AND THAT MAKES FOUR...!
EH...!
AH...!!
...IS THAT HE DEALT THE ONLY DORA TILE THAT HE HAD IN HIS HAND.
WHAT THAT MEANS...
JESUS...
NO NEED TO WOR-RY.
BUT THEN...
IT SEEMS LIKE HE'S GIVEN UP AND SETTLED FOR THE MANGAN WIN!
AND HERE I WAS, THINKIN' HE'D TRY AND END IT ALL IN ONE SHOT...
AT THE MOST IMPORTANT MOMENT...
...IN ORDER TO GET OUT OF II-SHAN-TEN...
AT THE MOST CRITICAL TIME...
I GUESS HE LET HIS GUARD DOWN, HUH...
HE GAVE UP THE FIGHT...!
HEH-HEH-HEH...
.....
...HE DEALT THE ONLY WAY FOR HIM TO GET A HANE-MAN!

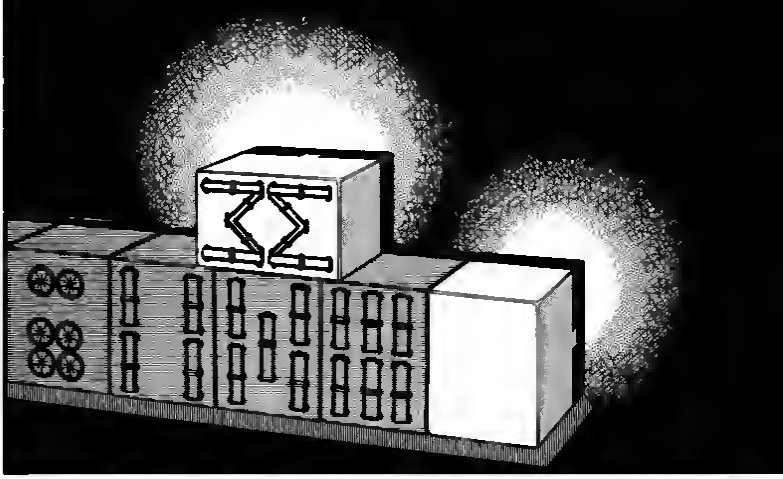

URABE'S 9TH TURN


WITH THAT 7-SOU KAN
THE 8-SOU ISN'T EX-ACTLY A SAFE TILE EITHER...
BUT
SO I OBVI-OUSLY CAN'T PLAY THAT HERE.
THE HAKU IS HIS LAST POSSIBLE FANPAI TILE

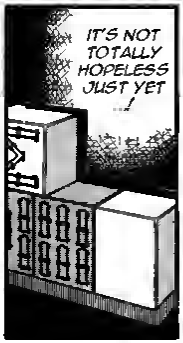
URABE IS AT CROSS-ROADS!

WHAT SHOULD I DO
IT COULD BE PART OF HIS TRAP.
FROM THE MO-MENT IT HAPPENED, THAT KAN TURNED ANY 8-SOUS I DRAW INTO L NDMINES...

OR THIS HAKU OVER HERE ...NOTHIN' ELSE.
THEN I NEED TO PLAY EITHER THE 8-SOU...
IF I WANT TO KEEP MY HAND IN TENPAI
I'M NOT GETTIN ANY BREAKS HERE, AM
GH ...!



I'M SAFE FOR RIGHT NOW
I KNOW THAT I WON'T BE DEAD EVEN IF HE MAKES A TSUMO, SINCE HE CAN'T HAVE A HANE MAN
THANKS TO THAT OORA


IT'S NOT TOTALLY HOPELESS JUST YET

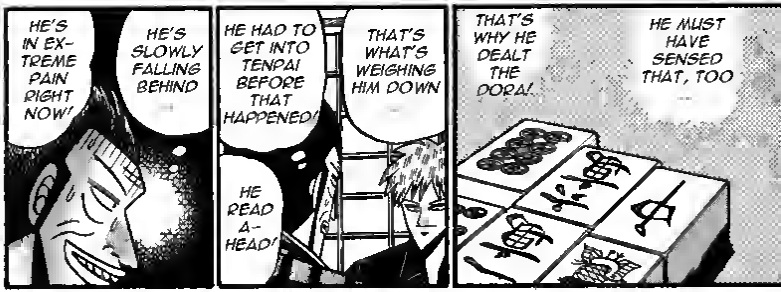
WAIT

THAT TAKES PRIORITY OVER EVERY-THIN' ELSE

THE ONLY FEAR I HAVE IS HIM GET-TIN' A DIRECT HIT ON ME WITH A MAN-GAN
THAT IN MIND, THE ONLY THING I'VE GOTTA WORRY ABOUT IS A DIRECT HIT

SETTLING FOR THE LOWER HAND IS PROOF.
AND THAT 2-3-4 MAN CALL ...
HE'S FEELIN' LIKE HE NEEDS TO GET TO TENPAI AS FAST AS HE CAN.
AS THINGS ARE NOW, THE FLOW HE HAD IS LEAVIN' 'IM IN LEAPS AND BOUNDS ...
YEAH, JUST THINK THIS THROUGH CALMLY...
...HE COULD'VE EVEN WON OFFA THAT PLAY!
HE WOULDN'T HAVE HAD TO CALL ...
THE 2-MAN THAT THE GUY TO HIS LEFT DEALT 'IM ...
IF HE'D'VE GOTTEN A BIT MORE LUCKY JUST THEN...
IT'D BE THIS 4-5-6 MAN CALL!
INSTEAD OF THE 2-3-4 MAN
IF IT'D BEEN A 5-MAN INSTEAD OF A 2-MAN
OR INSTEAD, WITH JUST THE HAND?
THAT'S A SIGN OF HIS FLOW RUNNING AWAY, FOR SURE.
HE WOULDN'T HAVE HAD TO DEAL THE DORA.
IF IT JUST HADN'T BEEN THAT 2-MAN ...
THEN, HE'D HAVE WORKED THE 6-MAN INTO HIS HAND...

...HE'LL HAVE NO FLOW LEFT FOR HIM!
IN THE NEXT...
BUT IF I CAN JUST ENDURE THIS ROUND...
HE'S HAD THE FLOW ON HIS SIDE FOR THE RIDE HERE...

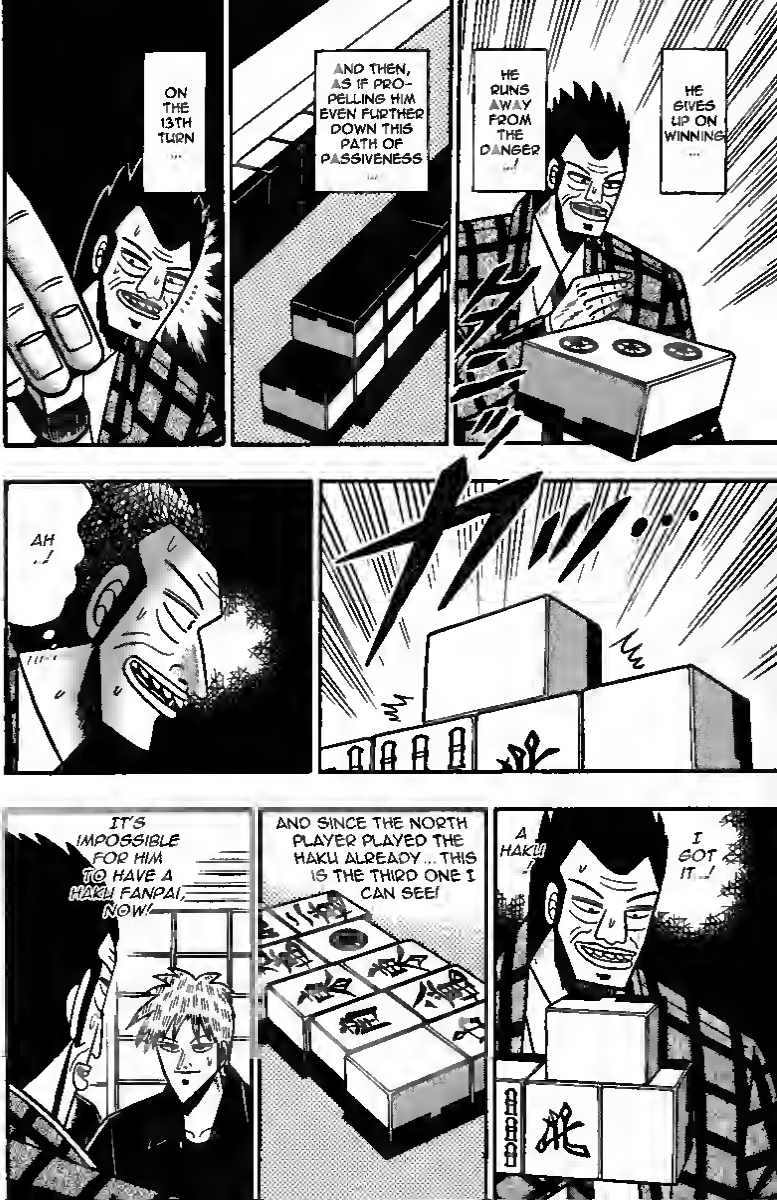

HE'S IN EXTREME PAIN RIGHT NOW!
HE'S SLOWLY FALLING BEHIND...
HE HAD TO GET INTO TENPAI BEFORE THAT HAPPENED!
HE READ A-HEAD!
THAT'S WHAT'S WEIGHING HIM DOWN...
THAT'S WHY HE DEALT THE DORA!
HE MUST HAVE SENSED THAT, TOO...

I'D NEVER BE ABLE TO TRUST MYSELF AGAIN IF I DEALT INTO HIS HAND!
SINCE IT'S A HOPELESS BATTLE FOR HIM...
HE WON'T GET ONE OR TWO MORE CHANCES TO GET IT BACK...
WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO MAKE SURE HE DOESN'T GET HIS LIFEBOAT AWAY FROM THE BAD FLOW...
IN A PLACE LIKE THIS...
HIS FLOW'S DECLINING EVEN WITH THAT CALL FROM THE NORTH PLAYER'S DISCARD

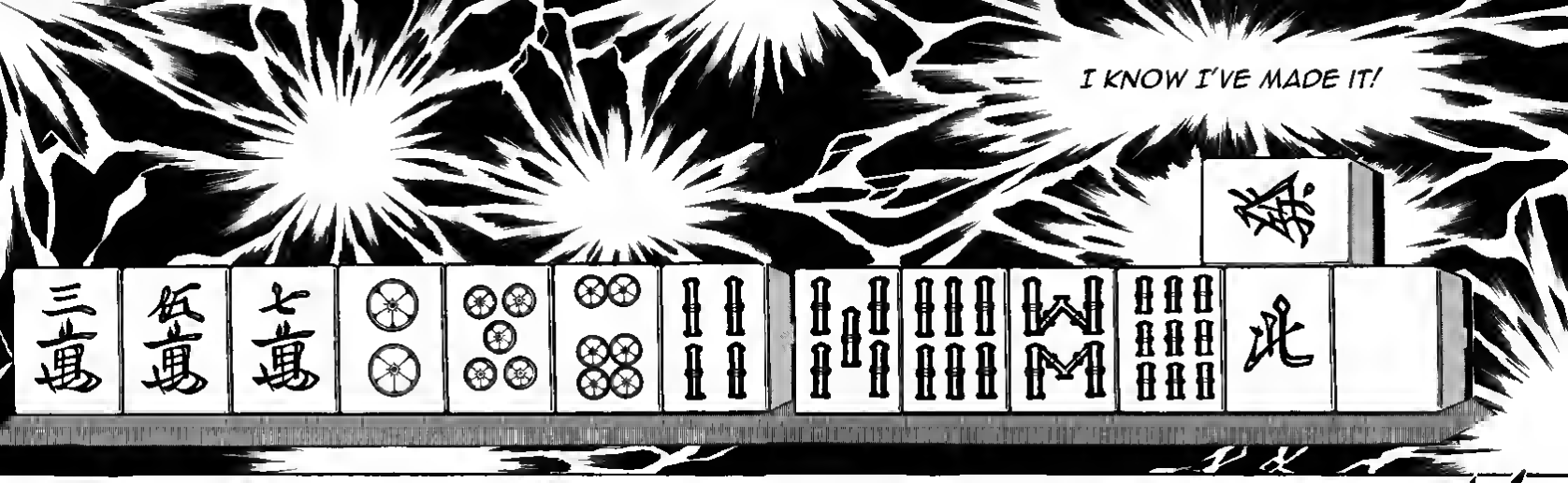
...OF GETTING A DIRECT HIT MANGAN HAND!
RIGHT NOW, I'LL CUT OFF ANY CHANCE HE HAS...
JUST BY DOING THIS, I CAN CUT OFF HIS ROAD TO VICTORY
AND THAT'S DEFENSE...!
DOING NOTHING BUT PROTECTING THE POINTS I HAVE!
ESPECIALLY SINCE THERE'S A MUCH EASIER WAY TO DO IT...
I'VE GOT IT ALL UNDER CONTROL!
COMPLETELY...
...!!
KOOOO

GET OUTTA HERE WITH NO EFFORT!
I'LL JUST EASE THROUGH THIS ONE...
I'M GIVIN' UP ON MY HAND, NOW.
SORRY, MAN, THAT'S JUST HOW IT GOES.
HEH-HEH
YOU'RE GOIN' DOWNHILL FAST!
I'LL BEAT YOU IN THE NEXT GAME...

HMM-HM
AKAGI
IT IS THE FORK IN THE ROAD
THIS DEALING OF THE 4-PIN MARKS WHERE THE CROSSROAD OF THE MATCH IS
YES
HE ONLY DEALS TILES THAT ARE SURE TO BE SAFE
HIS STRATEGY NOW IS ENTIRELY ONE OF DEFENSE
NO LONGER TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE SPEED OF THE HAND THAT HE WAS ONCE IN TENPAI FOR
AFTER CHOOSING THE PATH TO TAKE, URABE'S DISCARDS

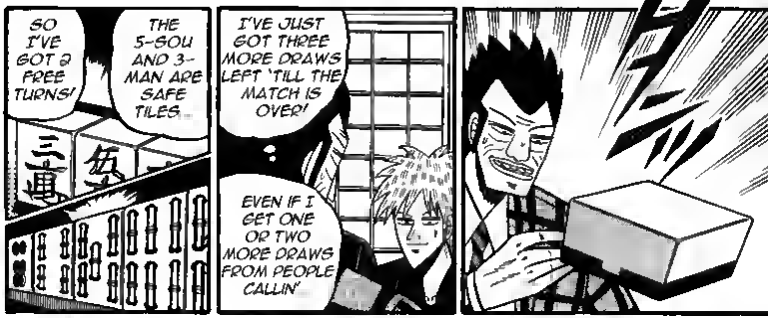

ON THE 13TH TURN ...
AND THEN, AS IF PROPELLING HIM EVEN FURTHER DOWN THIS PATH OF PASSIVENESS ...
HE RUNS AWAY FROM THE DANGER ...!
HE GIVES UP ON WINNING ...
AH ..!
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO HAVE A HAKU FANPAI, NOW!
AND SINCE THE NORTH PLAYER PLAYED THE HAKU ALREADY... THIS IS THE THIRD ONE I CAN SEE!
A HAKU!
I GOT IT ..!

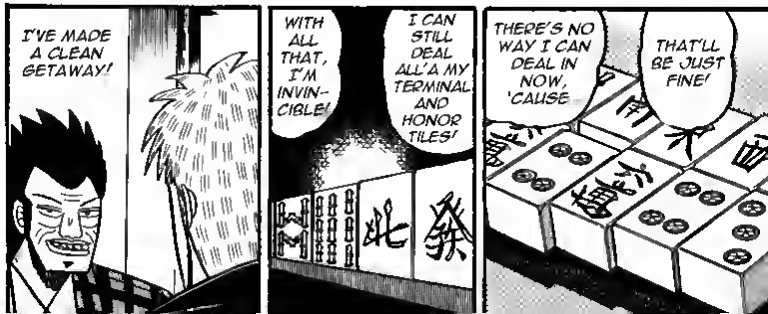
HIS HAND CAN ONLY BE A TANYAO ONE!
WITH THIS, THERE'S NO WAY HE CAN BE WAITIN' ON FANPAI TILES...
LOOKS LIKE THE FLOW IS ON MY SIDE NOW, PAL!
HEH-HEH-HEH
ALL OF THESE TERMINAL AND HONOR TILES I'VE BEEN COLLECTING ARE NOW TOTALLY SAFE TO PLAY AGAINST HIM!
SINCE WE'VE RULED OUT A FANPAI HAND
SO NOW
NOT EVEN THAT!
NO
I'VE PRO-BAB-LY MADE IT, THEN!
HEH-HEH-HEH


I KNOW I'VE MADE IT!

BUT IN FACT, IT'S JUST THE OPPOSITE
YOU MIGHT THINK THAT ALL WE CAN DO NOW IS KISS OUR MONEY GOOD-BYE
ISHI-KAWA-SAN
IT'S FINE, IT'S FINE
AKAGI
HMM-HM

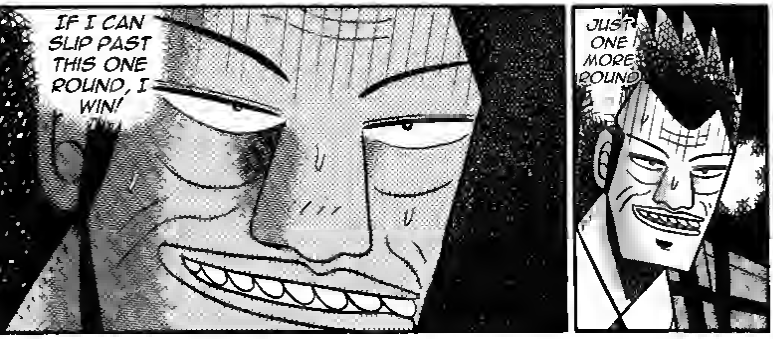
YOU CAN NEVER BE 100% SURE OF THE OUT-COME
UNTIL THE FINAL TURN OF THE BATTLE HAS BEEN TAKEN
WHO'S TO SAY HE WON'T STILL DEAL IN?
ALL THE MO-NEY AND POSES-SIONS
IT COULD TURN AROUND IN AN INSTANT ALL THE LITTLE NUM-BERS YOU LIKE
EVERY LAST BIT COULD COME BACK IN AN INSTANT


SO I'VE GOT 2 FREE TURNS!
THE 5-SOU AND 3-MAN ARE SAFE TILES
I'VE JUST GOT THREE MORE DRAWS LEFT 'TILL THE MATCH IS OVER!
EVEN IF I GET ONE OR TWO MORE DRAWS FROM PEOPLE CALLIN'

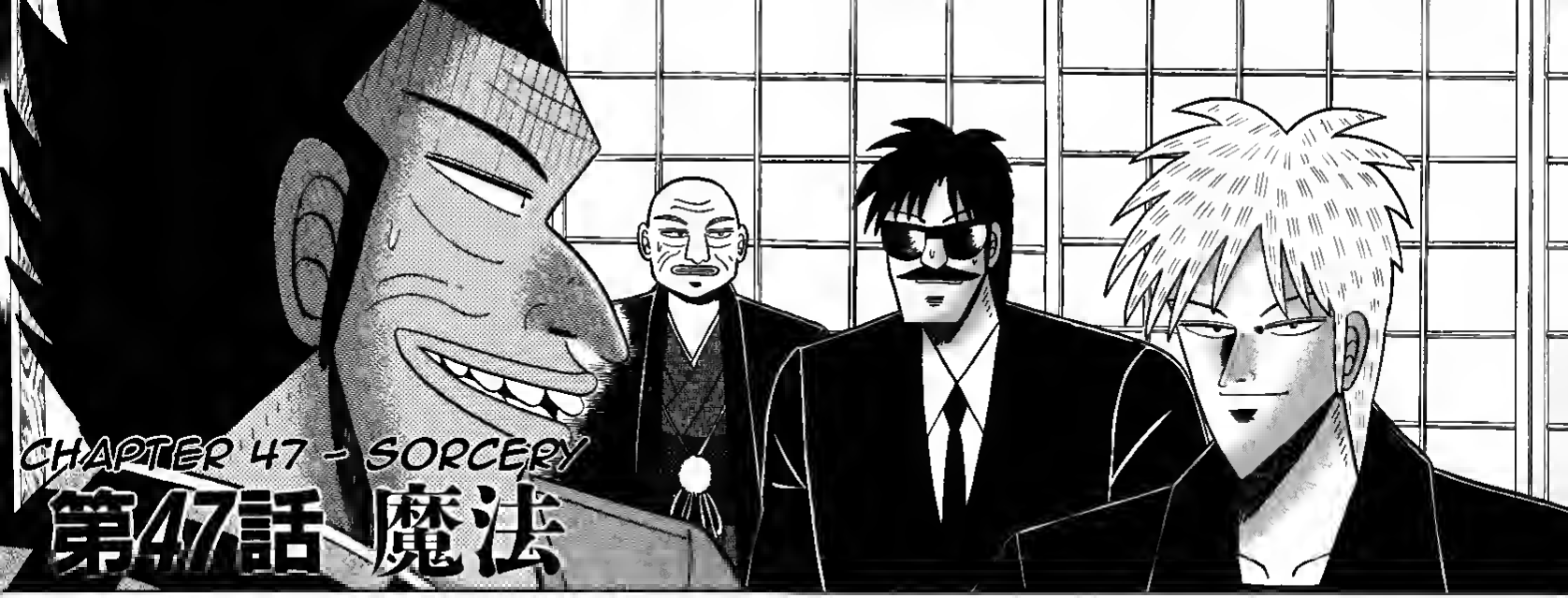

I'VE MADE A CLEAN GETAWAY!
WITH ALL THAT, I'M INVIN-CIBLE!
I CAN STILL DEAL ALL'A MY TERMINAL AND HONOR TILES!
THERE'S NO WAY I CAN DEAL IN NOW, 'CAUSE
THAT'LL BE JUST FINE!

TO BE PROUD THAT YOU MADE YOUR CLEAN GETAWAY.
IT'S STILL WAY TOO SOON FOR YOU TO ASSUME THAT YOU'RE SAFE...
URABE
THERE'S STILL A PATH FOR ME TO TAKE.
ピピピ!!!
YOU'LL BE FROZEN DEAD IN YOUR TRACKS.
JUST YOU WAIT AND SEE ...

ざわ..
ざわ..
.....

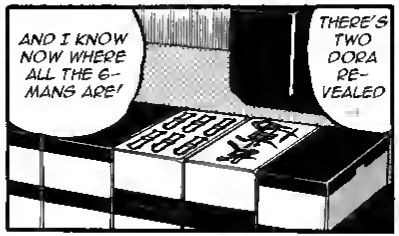

IF I CAN SLIP PAST THIS ONE ROUND, I WIN!
JUST ONE MORE ROUND

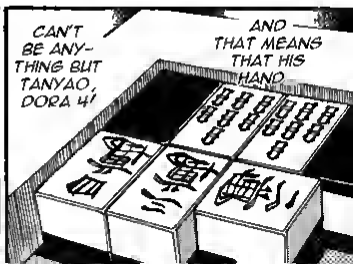
I'LL HAVE WON!
SO IF I CAN MAKE IT TO THE NEXT ROUND
WITH THAT, IT'S CLEAR THAT AKAGI'S LUCK IS WEARIN' DOWN
HE HAD TO MAKE THAT 2-3-4 MAN CALL
HE COULDN'T HOLD ON TO THAT DOPA

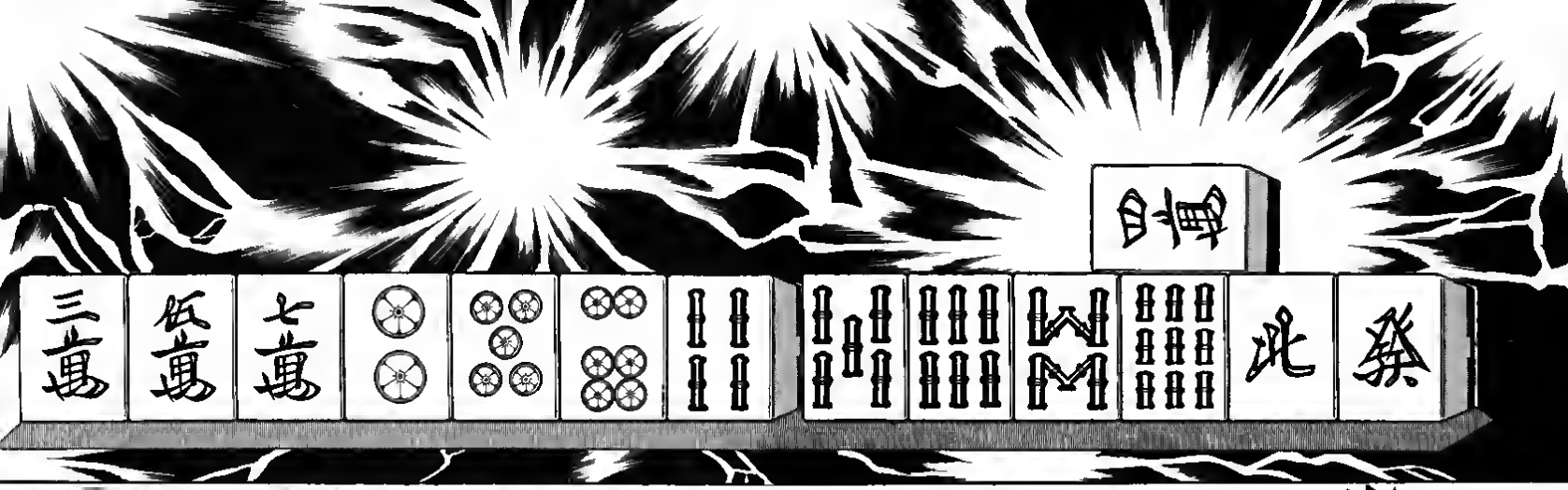


CHAPTER 47 - SORCERY
第47話 魔法

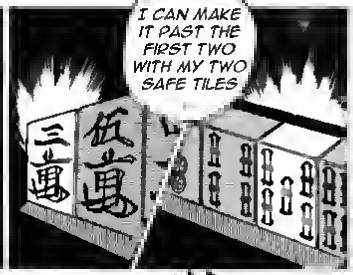
AS LONG AS IT'S JUST THAT, THERE'S NO PROBLEM!
IF THAT'S ALL HE CAN DO, THEN I CAN STILL MOVE ON
I CAN HAVE ANOTHER SHOT IN THE NEXT ROUND!







I'LL BE FINE WITH ALL'A MY TERMINALS AND HONORS!
...AND I CAN ALSO USE THE TILES THAT HE WON'T NEED FOR HIS OPEN TANYAO...


I CAN MAKE IT PAST THE FIRST TWO WITH MY TWO SAFE TILES

IT'LL BE A PIECE O' CAKE TO GET THROUGH THIS OUND!
HE'S PRO'LLY OUT OF IDEAS FOR HOW TO MAKE ME DEAL INTO HIS HAND...

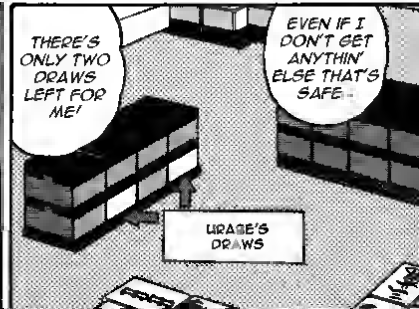
NO PROB-LEMS AT ALL!

THE WAY THINGS ARE, THERE'S NOTHIN' TO WORRY ABOUT!

NO MATTER WHAT I DRAW
NOT A PROB-LEM

THIS TILE MAY NOT PASS THROUGH AKAGI
URAGE'S DRAW IS A H-MAN

SO, EVEN THOUGH I HAVE TO DISCARD THREE MORE TIMES....


THERE'S ONLY TWO DRAWS LEFT FOR ME!
EVEN IF I DON'T GET ANYTHIN' ELSE THAT'S SAFE...
URAGE'S DRAWS

I'VE MADE A CLEAN GET-AWAY!
AKAGI
HMM-HM-HM
INDEED
IT SEEMED AS THOUGH AKAGI WAS COMPLETELY OUT OF WAYS TO BE ABLE TO WIN THE MATCH
CERTAINLY, THAT THERE WAS NO WAY FOR THE ROUND TO END WITH URABE DEALING INTO HIS HAND
THAT WAS THE SITUATION THAT SEEMED APPARENT
BUT DESPITE THAT OBVIOUS THOUGHT
ON THE 13TH TURN
IT WAS URABE'S TURN TO TAKE A TILE FROM THE WALL. AFTER THE SOUTH PLAYER GAVE UP A 7-PIN...
...BUT BEFORE HE COULD EVEN REACH FOR HIS TILE,

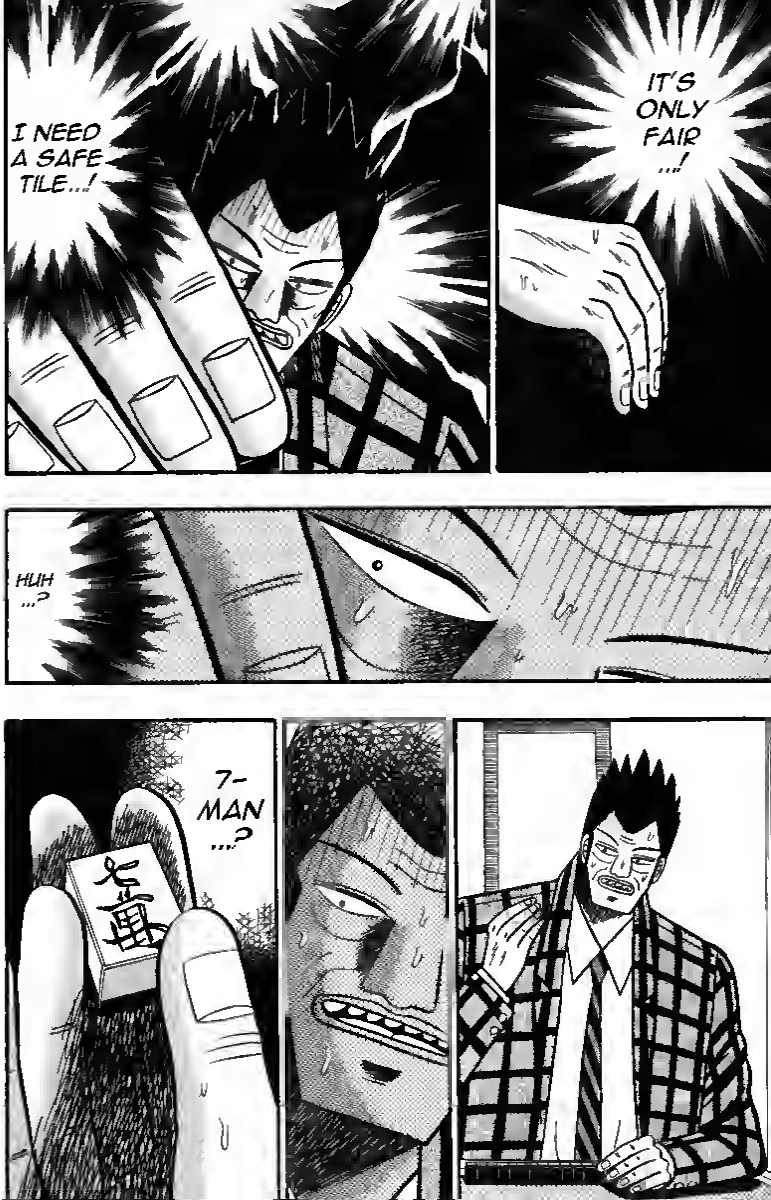
WHA-
PON!
AKAGI ONCE AGAIN RE-VIVED FROM THE GRAVE!
AGAINST THE EX-PECTA-TIONS OF EVERYONE AT THE TABLE.

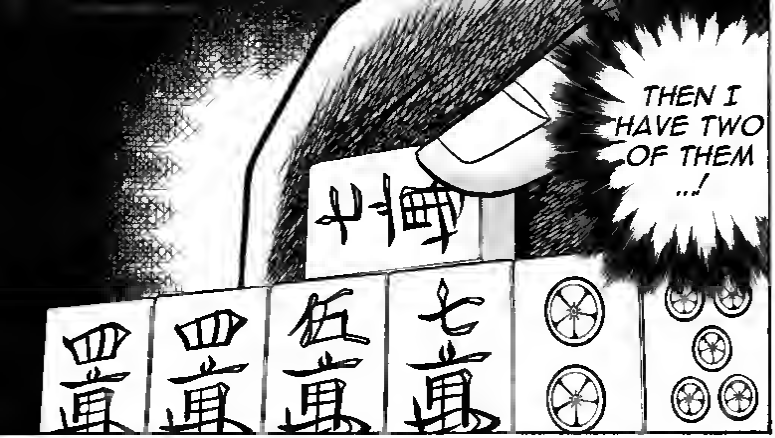
SAN SHOKU DOU KOU
HE'S GOIN' FOR SAN SHOKU DOU KOU...!
NO WAY...!

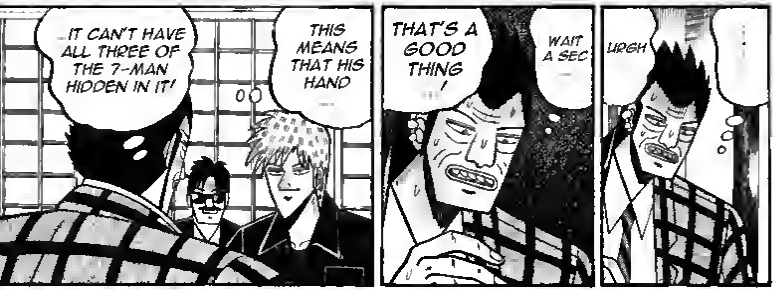
A HAND LIKE THIS JUST POPS UP?!
THIS CLOSE TO THE END ...
WHAT'S UP WITH THIS FLOW?!
IT'S PROBABLE THAT HE'S WAITING ON MY HATSU, OR HAS SOME WAIT TIED TO THE 8 AND 9
IF IT'S REALLY A SAN SHOKU DOU KOU THEN
PINNING DOWN AN EXACT WAIT IS TOTALLY IMPOSSIBLE!
BUT THAT'S JUST THE GENERAL IDEA...
AND ALL THE REMAINING HONOR TILES ARE VERY LIKELY TOO!
BUT ALL THE TILES FROM 3 TO 7...
THAT'S JUST HOW ABNORMAL THIS YAKU IS!
IN FACT, IT MIGHT BE MORE THREATENING THAN EVEN AN OPEN YAKUMAN
IT'S ALMOST AS RARE TO GET A SAN SHOKU DOU KOU AS IT IS A DAI SAN GEN... AND JUST AS THREATENING!
HE MAY AS WELL HAVE ALL OF HIS CALLS EXPOSED ...
HONESTLY, HOW COULD HE GET A HAND LIKE THAT...

GOD DAM-MIT!
AND HE GOT JUST WHAT HE WANTED RIGHT AT THE MOMENT OF TRUTH
AND I COULDN'T EVEN SEE WHERE THE BATTLE WAS BEING FOUGHT!
ALL THAT WAS GOING ON
A SAN SHOKU DOU KOU!
HIS HAND COULD BE
BUT SINCE HE CALLED THAT 7-PIN
I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE IT
IT'S NOT OUT OF THE QUESTION
SOMETHING LIKE THIS SAN SHOKU DOU KOU WITH A SINGLE WAIT

THESE TERMI-NALS AND HONORS THAT WERE SAFE BEFORE
WHICH MEANS
I'VE GOT NO SAFE TILES
ARE NOW EQUALLY AS RISKY AS ANY-THING ELSE
'CAUSE IF NOT, I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW MUCH THE HEAVENS ARE FAVORING THIS SON OF A BITCH...
WHAT, IS THE GUY TO MY LEFT IN ON IT, TOO?!
JESUS CHRIST
AT LEAST GIVE THIS TO ME!
C'MON


I NEED A SAFE TILE...!
IT'S ONLY FAIR ...!
HUH ...?
7-MAN ...?


THEN I HAVE TWO OF THEM ..!


..IT CAN'T HAVE ALL THREE OF THE 7-MAN HIDDEN IN IT!
THIS MEANS THAT HIS HAND ...
THAT'S A GOOD THING ..!
WAIT A SEC ...
URGH ...

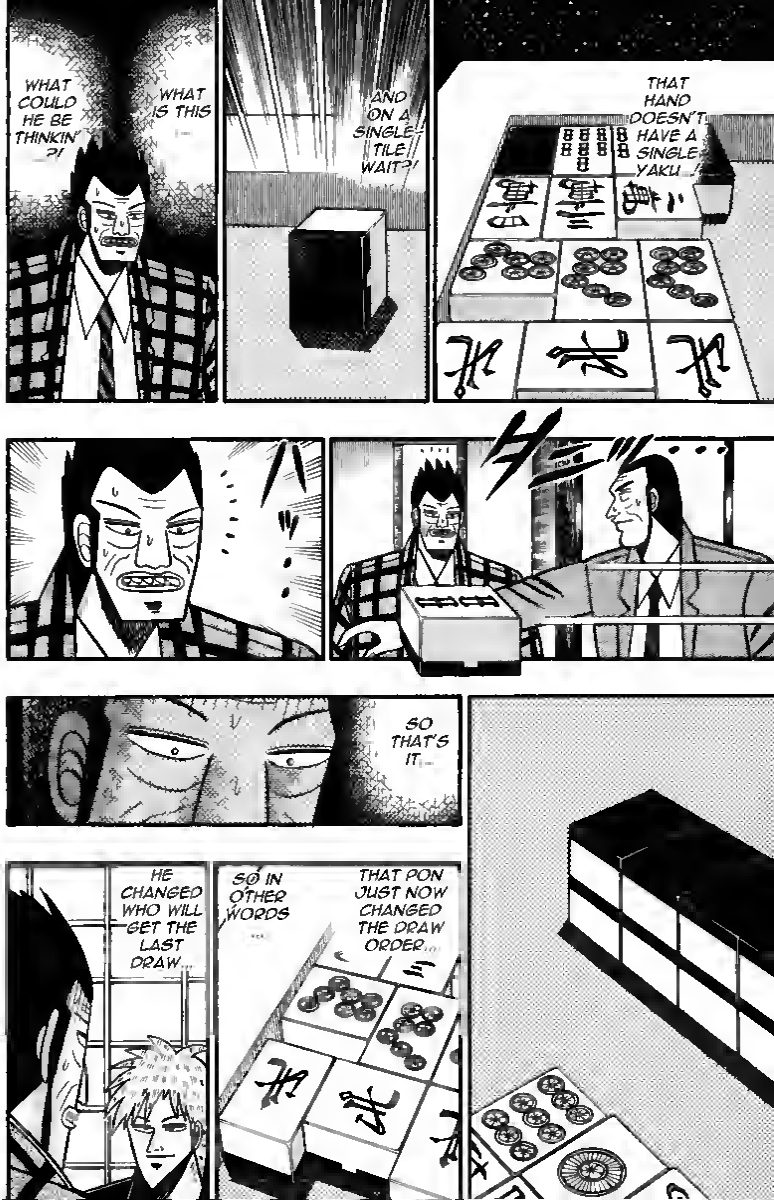
THAT RIGHT?
HEHEHE
OW...
IN THAT CASE, AS LONG AS I DON'T DEAL ANY OF MY 7-MANS...
THERE'S NO WAY FOR HIM TO GET A SAN SHOKU DOU KOU!
HE'S, AT BEST, IN A DOUBLE WAIT FOR THE 7-MAN AND SOMETHING ELSE !
IN ORDER FOR IT TO STILL BE A SAN SHOKU DOU KOU ...

WELL, WHADDA YA KNOW
LOOKS LIKE IT WAS THE DOU KOU THAT GOT AWAY!
HEHE HE
THAT KINDA LUCK IS ALL YOU'VE GOT LEFT?
SO THAT'S HOW IT IS
IF YOU WERE TRYIN' TO SCARE ME, YOU DIDN'T DO A VERY GOOD JOB!
IT'S JUST LIKE I THOUGHT... THAT MONSTEROUS LUCK IS GETTIN' WORN OUT!
IT'S WEARIN' DOWN!
I JUST GOT THIS ALL-REVEALING 7-MAN OUTTA NOWHERE!
LOOKS LIKE I'M THE ONE WITH THE LUCK, NOW!
HEHE HE...!
NOW I'M REALLY SAFE!

HEH-HEH!
YOU CAN'T TOUCH THAT TILE!
DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU'RE GOIN' FOR TANYAO OR SAN SHOKU DOU KOU
THAT PEI'S INVIN-CIBLE!
THERE'S NOTHIN' YOU CAN DO TO ME NOW!
I WONDER ABOUT THAT
HUH ?
YOU REALLY NEVER KNOW ...

PON ...?!
WHA ...?!
PON.

AKAGI IS NOW IN TENPAI ...
WITH AN UNMISTAKABLE SINGLE WAIT...!
URGH ..!
WHAT THE
THIS, THIS IS


WHAT COULD HE BE THINKIN' ?!
WHAT IS THIS ...
AND ON A SINGLE TILE WAIT?!
THAT HAND DOESN'T HAVE A SINGLE YAKU...
SO THAT'S IT...
HE CHANGED WHO WILL GET THE LAST DRAW...
SO IN OTHER WORDS ...
THAT PON JUST NOW CHANGED THE DRAW ORDER...

WHICH MEANS THAT I'LL HAVE THE LAST DRAW...!
THE DEAD WALL MOVED OVER ONE, TOO.
AND SINCE THERE'S BEEN A KAN...
HE'LL RON OFF OF THE LAST DISCARD ...?
SO IF THAT'S WHAT HE MEANT TO DO...
GH ...
DORA 4. MAN-GAN.
HOU-TEI RON ...
THAT'S A HOU-TEI RON...!

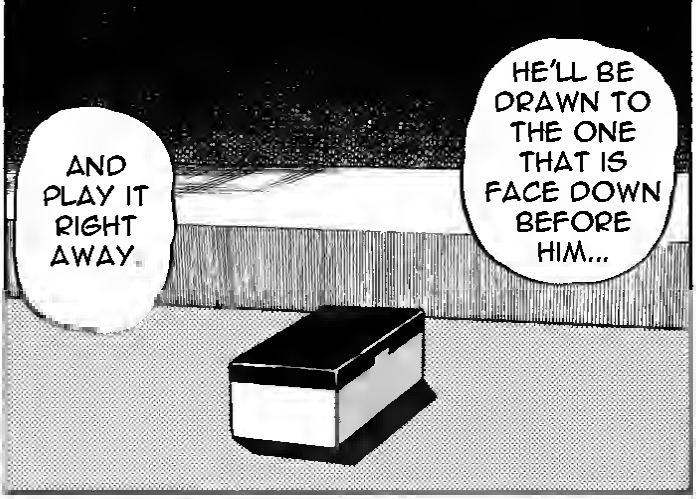
EVEN THE SAN SHOKU DOU KOU AMOUNTED TO NOTHING!
FROM THE TANYAO TO THE FANPAI
THAT'S WHAT HE WAS GOING FOR
SO IT'S TRUE...
IT WAS ALL JUST A GIANT BLUFF!
EVERYTHING HE DID THROUGH THE WHOLE MATCH
HOW CAN THERE BE SOMEONE WHO PLAYS LIKE THIS?!
IMPOSSIBLE!
HE HAD ME RUNNING AROUND IN CIRCLES!
I WAS JUST BEING LED AROUND BY THIS KID

DAM-MIT!
DO YOU THINK I'LL JUST ROLL OVER AND DIE AGAINST SUCH A CRAZY PLAYING STYLE?!
IT'S SO DUMB... HE'S LEAVING TOO MUCH TO SHEER CHANCE...!
I NEED A SAFE TILE...!
ALL OF THOSE INSANE MIRACLES WILL BE FOR NOTHING!!
IF I CAN JUST DRAW... A SAFE TILE, HERE...
A XIA...!
URABE DRAWS, AND PICKS UP...
KH...!

A XIA, A TILE WHICH AKAGI HAS NOT YET DEALT ...!

HMM-HM
THERE'S NO TELLING IF IT WILL END HERE OR NOT!!
WHAT DO YOU THINK WE'RE GOING TO DO IF YOU LEAVE RIGHT NOW?!
OUT OF THE 14 TILES IN URABE'S HAND ...
I'VE PLACED A MAGIC SPELL ON THAT SINGLE TILE WAIT.
HUH ...?
BUT IT WILL END HERE
WHOA, WHOA ...!
TAKE CARE OF WHAT, EXACTLY ...?!

IF YOU HAD DRAWN A SAFE TILE JUST NOW
...YOU MIGHT HAVE HAD A SMALL CHANCE TO TURN THIS AROUND.
IT'S OVER NOW.
HMM-HM-HM
HUH ...?
YOU CAN TAKE CARE OF THE REST.
ISHI-KAWA-SAN
THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT.
THERE'S NO WAY OUT.
BUT SINCE YOU DREW A TILE THAT I HAVEN'T PLAYED
パタ...


HE'LL BE DRAWN TO THE ONE THAT IS FACE DOWN BEFORE HIM...
AND PLAY IT RIGHT AWAY.

YOU'VE GOT NO PROB-LEM AT ALL
THAT'S ALL THAT THERE IS TO IT, ISHIKAWA-SAN
HMM-HM

WHA-...?!

第48話 本物
CHAPTER 48 - GENUINE

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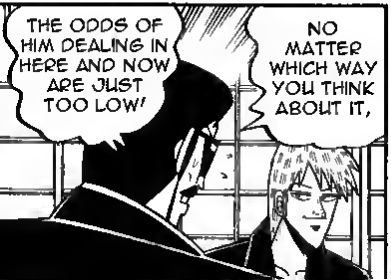
ざわ..

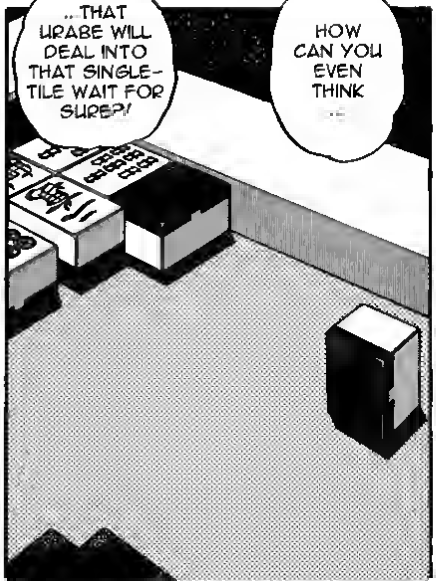
THAT IS, IF HE WERE DOWN TO A SINGLE TILE, AS WELL!

...YOU MIGHT BE A-BLE TO SAY THAT ...
I MEAN, SURE, IF URABE WERE IN YOUR SITUATION, TOO...

HOW CAN YOU ACT LIKE THERE ISN'T ANY DOUBT?!


THE ODDS OF HIM DEALING IN HERE AND NOW ARE JUST TOO LOW!
NO MATTER WHICH WAY YOU THINK ABOUT IT,

IN OTHER WORDS, HE HAS ALL 14 TILES LEFT TO DEAL WITH!
BUT HIS HAND IS TOTALLY CONCEALED, AND HE HAS NOT CALLED RIICHI!

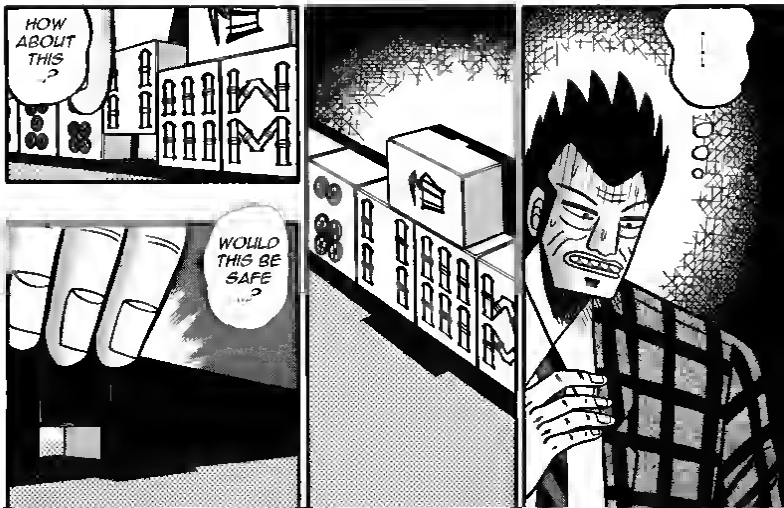

..THAT URABE WILL DEAL INTO THAT SINGLE-TILE WAIT FOR SURE?!
HOW CAN YOU EVEN THINK ..

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE SAYING?!
THERE'S NO WAY!

THAT'S RIGHT...
.....
I DON'T CARE HOW SURE YOU ARE!
THERE'S NO WAY I'LL LET YOU JUST UP AND LEAVE US RIGHT NOW!!
THIS ISHIKAWA GUY KNOWS WHAT HE'S TALKIN 'BOUT, AT LEAST...
ALL THIS TALK ABOUT MAGIC AND SORCERY...
THIS HOUTEI DORA 4 TENPAI...
THIS IS AS FAR AS IT CAN TAKE HIM
IT'S GOTTA BE A BLUFF!
THERE'S NO WAY
WHAT'S THIS CRAP ABOUT IT BEING A SURE THING THAT I'LL DEAL IN?

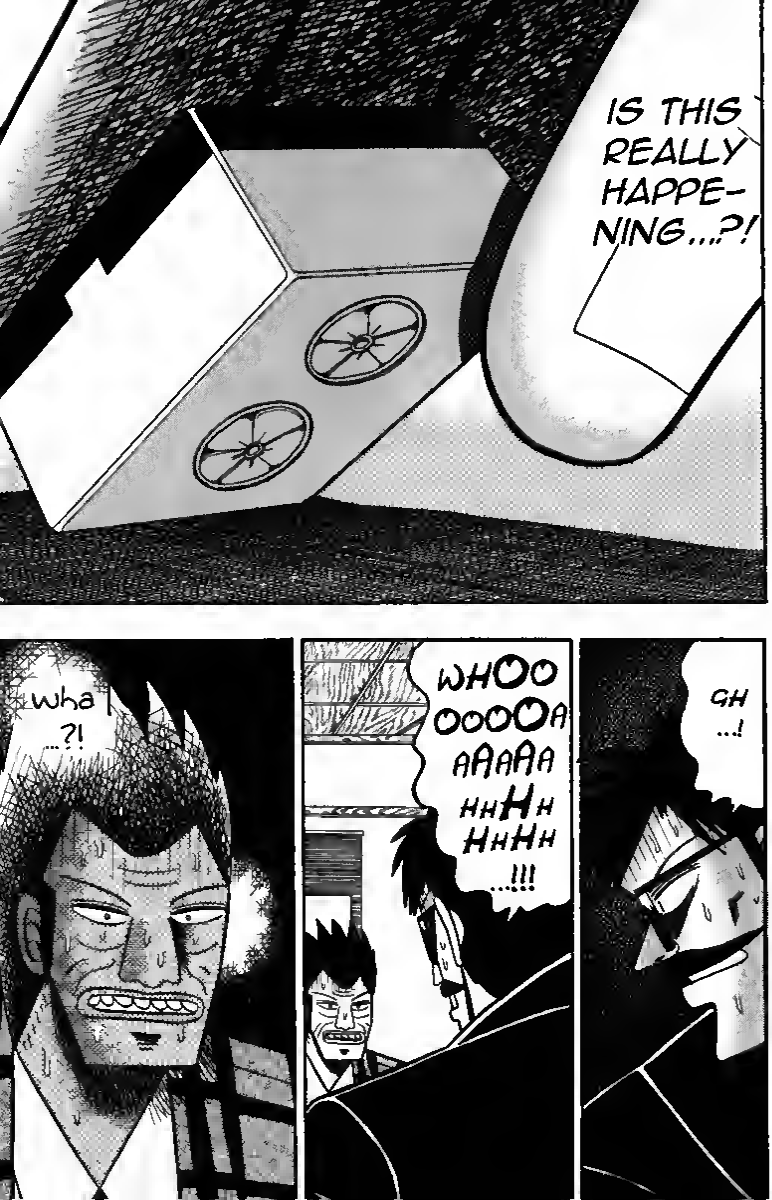
THAT'S ALL IT CAN BE
SO...I CAN DO THIS!
I'VE GOT GREAT ODDS!
I'VE GOT 14 TILES HERE, 10 DIFFERENT KINDS TO CHOOSE FROM.
I CAN PLAY ANY OF 'EM THAT I FEEL IS SAFE!
HE CAN'T PICK MY TILE FOR ME...
I GET TO CHOOSE FOR MYSELF!
HIS WINNING TILE MIGHT NOT EVEN BE IN MY HAND, BUT EVEN IF IT IS, THERE'S STILL JUST A 1/10 CHANCE THAT I'LL PICK IT!
IT'S PLAIN DUMB TO THINK OTHERWISE...
WITH ALL'A THAT BEHIND ME, YOU STILL THINK I'LL JUST GIVE YOU THE ONE YOU WANT?
GIMME A FUC-KIN' BREAK

FOR SURE.
I'LL GET AROUND IT.


HOW ABOUT THIS ?
WOULD THIS BE SAFE ?
...
...

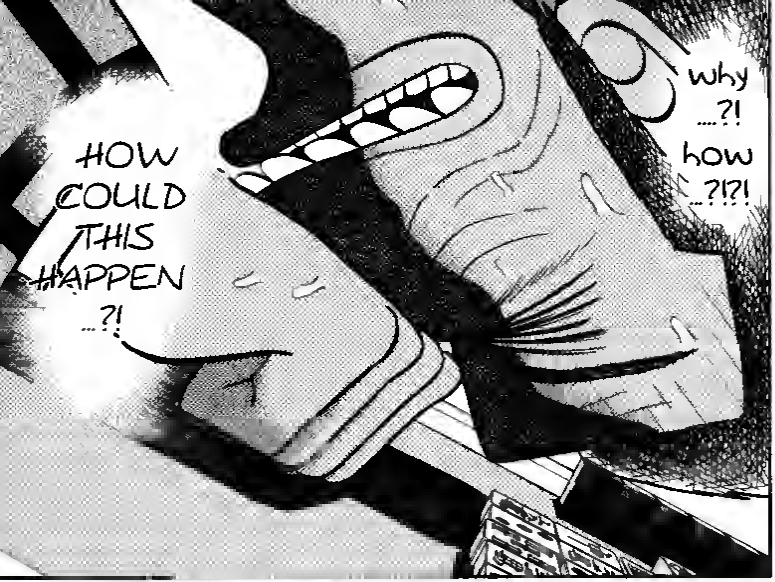
THIS ONE.
TCH

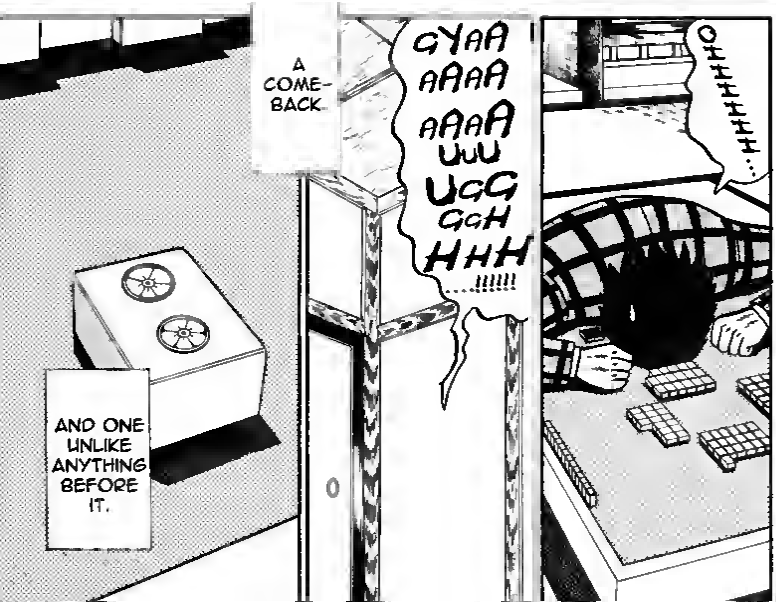
THIS 2-PIN IS THE ONLY TILE I'VE GOT THAT'S REALLY SAFE...
IT'LL PASS
THERE'S NO WAY THAT CAN BE THE ONE YOU GOT.
WHAT DO YA SAY TO THAT?
HEHE HE...
CAN IT REALLY BE TRUE ?!
OR SOME KIND OF ILLU-SION ?!
IS THIS A DREAM ?!
NO WAY...!
URGH ...?!
.....


IS THIS REALLY HAPPE-NING...?!
GH ...!
WHOO OOOOAA AAAAA HHHHH HHHH ...!!!
Wha ...?!

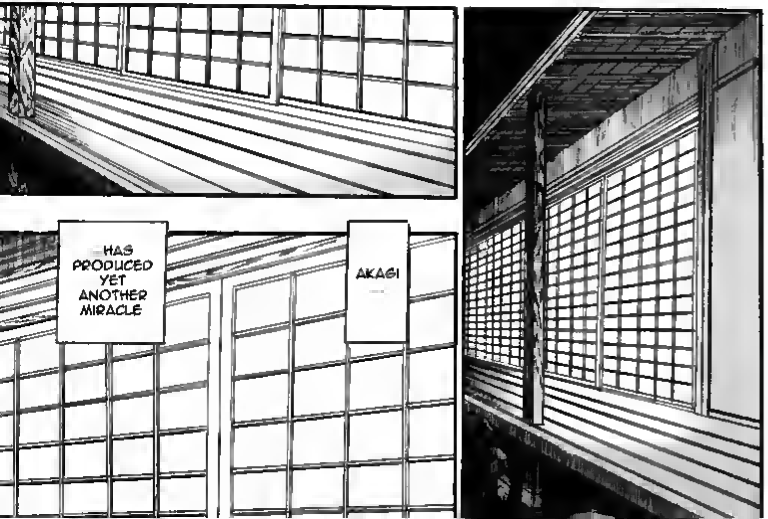
R...
RON!
MANGAN ...!
HOUTEI ... DORA 4...
IT'S A COME-BACK ...!!
.....
Gh

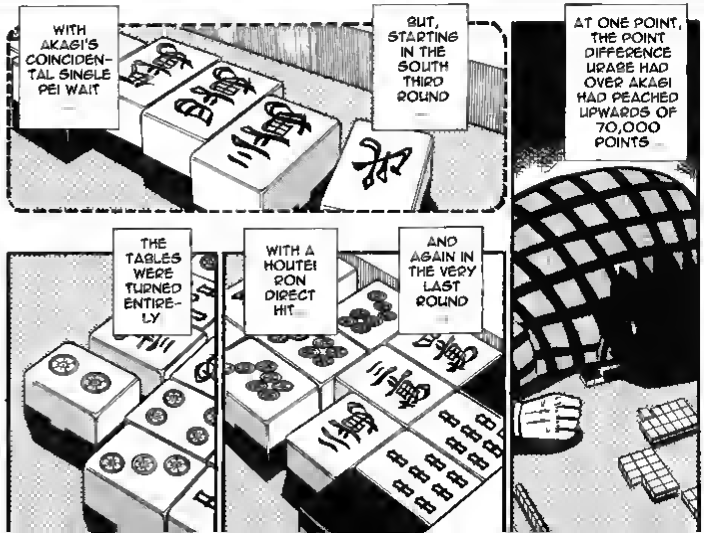
it can't be ...!
it ...
IT CAN'T ...!

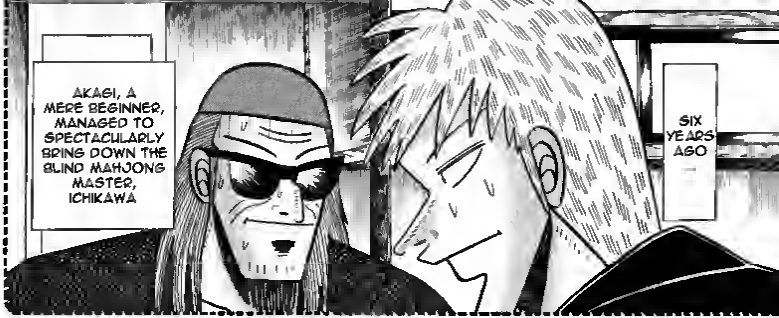

HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN ...?!
why ....?! how ..?!?!

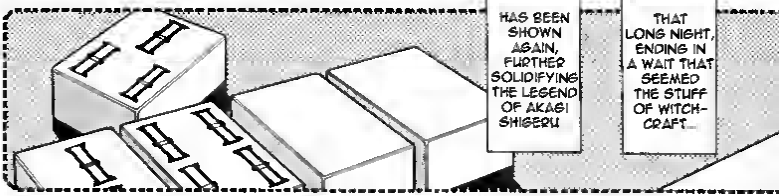

A COME-BACK
GYAA AAAA AAAA UUU UGG GGH HHH ..!!!!!
OHHHHHH...
AND ONE UNLIKE ANYTHING BEFORE IT.

...HAS COME TO AN END.
THE ULTIMATE DEATH-MATCH BETWEEN AKAGI AND URABE...


...HAS PRODUCED YET ANOTHER MIRACLE
AKAGI

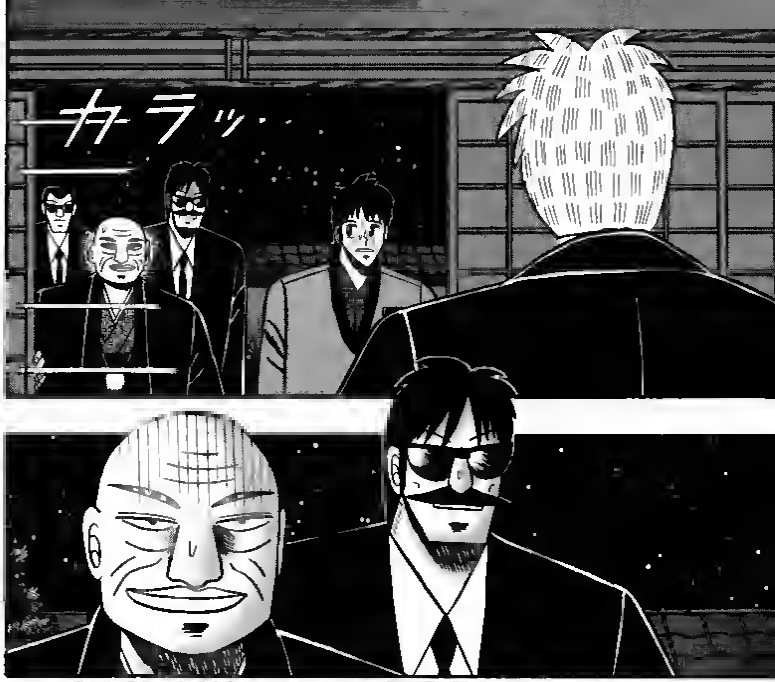

WITH AKAGI'S COINCIDENTAL SINGLE PEI WAIT
BUT, STARTING IN THE SOUTH THIRD ROUND
AT ONE POINT, THE POINT DIFFERENCE URABE HAD OVER AKAGI HAD REACHED UPWARDS OF 70,000 POINTS
THE TABLES WERE TURNED ENTIRELY
WITH A HOUTEI RON DIRECT HIT
AND AGAIN IN THE VERY LAST ROUND

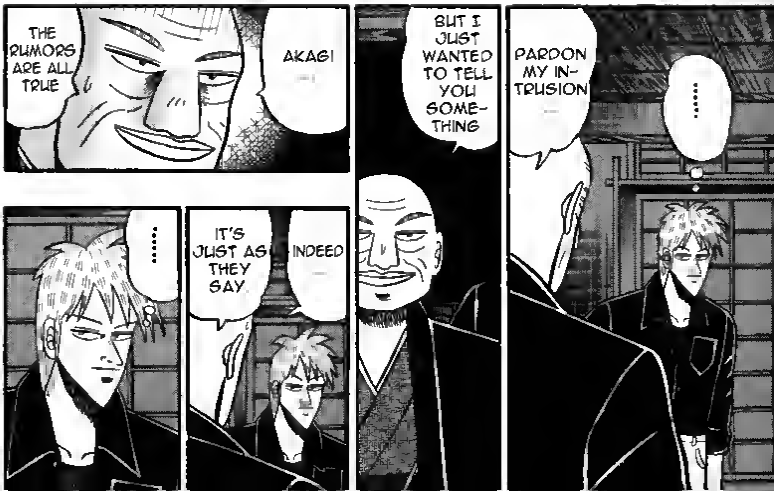

AKAGI, A MERE BEGINNER, MANAGED TO SPECTACULARLY BRING DOWN THE BLIND MAHJONG MASTER, ICHIKAWA
SIX YEARS AGO...

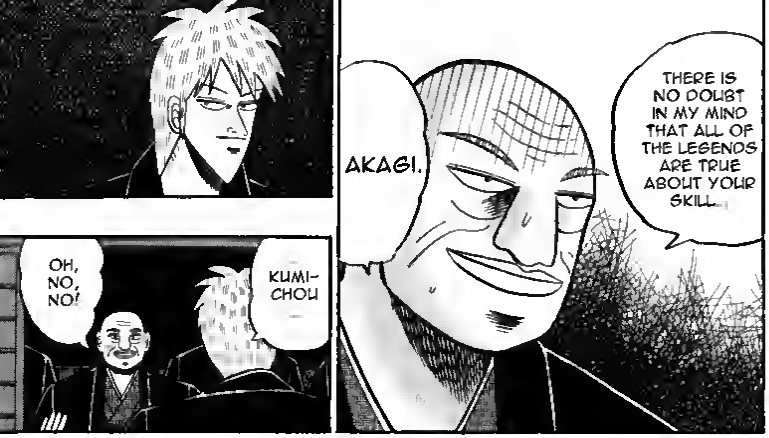

HAS BEEN SHOWN AGAIN, FURTHER SOLIDIFYING THE LEGEND OF AKAGI SHIGERU
THAT LONG NIGHT, ENDING IN A WAIT THAT SEEMED THE STUFF OF WITCH-CRAFT...

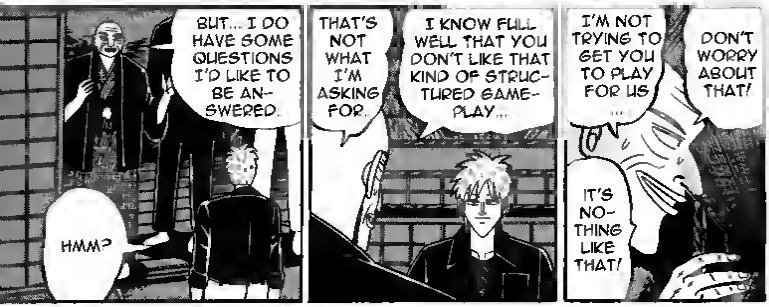
ナラ…

HMM-HM
HEY, OSAMU
I BEAT URABE, SOMEONE THAT THE FAKE COULDN'T EVEN TOUCH
BUT IN THE END...
I PROVED MY SUPERIORITY THAT WAY, SO THERE'S NO REASON TO STAY HERE
WAS TO TEST MYSELF AGAINST THAT FAKE ME
THE ONLY REASON I WAS HERE
TO PROVE THAT I WAS BETTER THAN HIM
LET'S GET GOING, NOW.
WE'RE DONE HERE
OH?
THAT'S NOT REALLY TRUE ... ABOUT NOT NEEDING TO STAY HERE
WELL...
ERR...
OH... OKAY...
SO LET'S HIT THE ROAD.


カラッ…

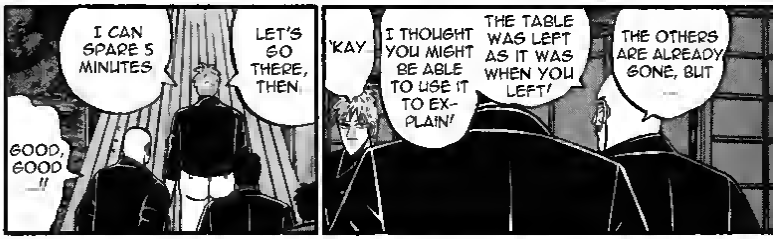

THE RUMORS ARE ALL TRUE
AKAGI
BUT I JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU SOME-THING
PARDON MY IN-TRUSION
……
……
IT'S JUST AS THEY SAY
INDEED

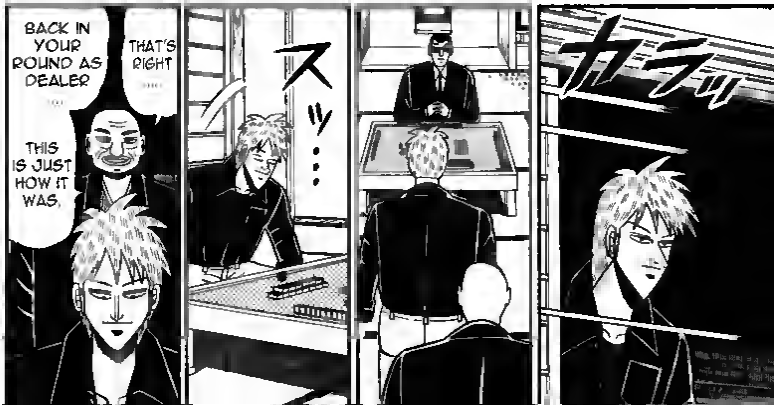

AKAGI.
THERE IS NO DOUBT IN MY MIND THAT ALL OF THE LEGENDS ARE TRUE ABOUT YOUR SKILL...!
KUMI-CHOU...
OH, NO, NO!

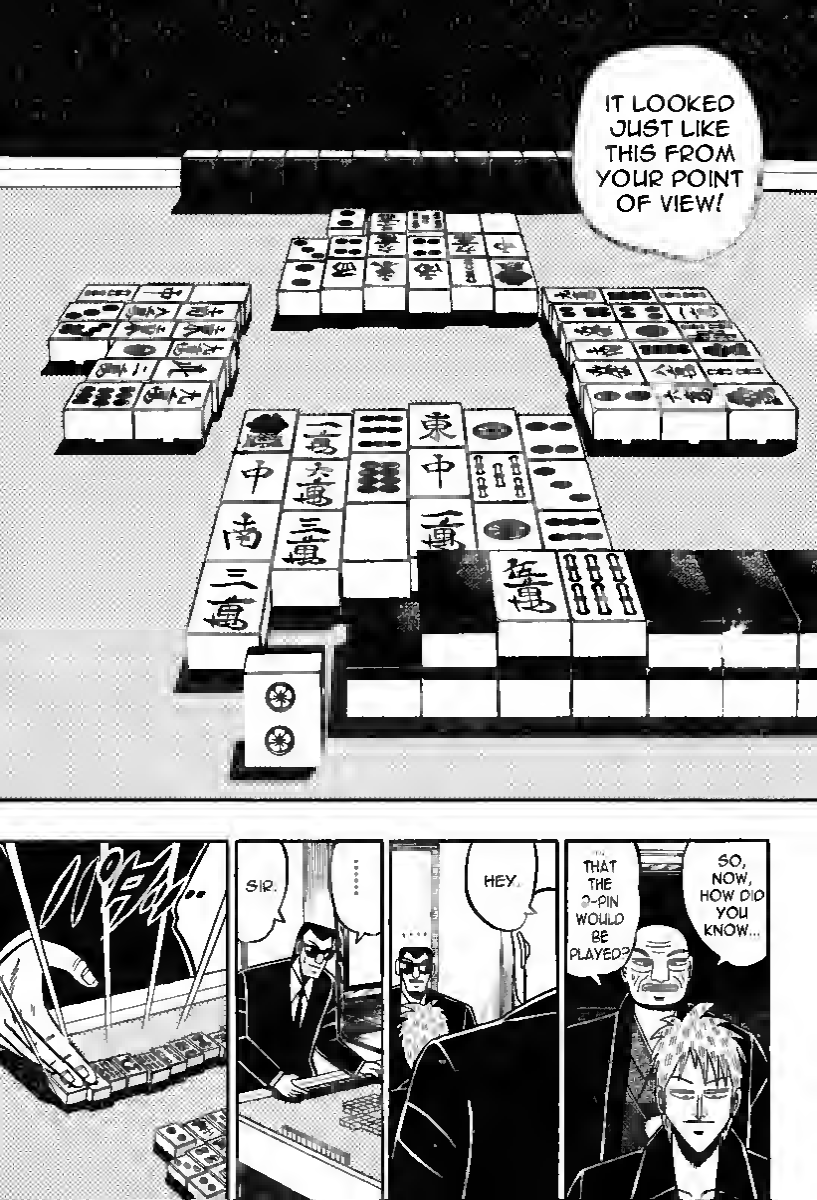

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT!
I'M NOT TRYING TO GET YOU TO PLAY FOR US...
IT'S NO-THING LIKE THAT!
I KNOW FULL WELL THAT YOU DON'T LIKE THAT KIND OF STRUC-TURED GAME-PLAY...
THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M ASKING FOR.
BUT... I DO HAVE SOME QUESTIONS I'D LIKE TO BE AN-SWERED.
HMM?

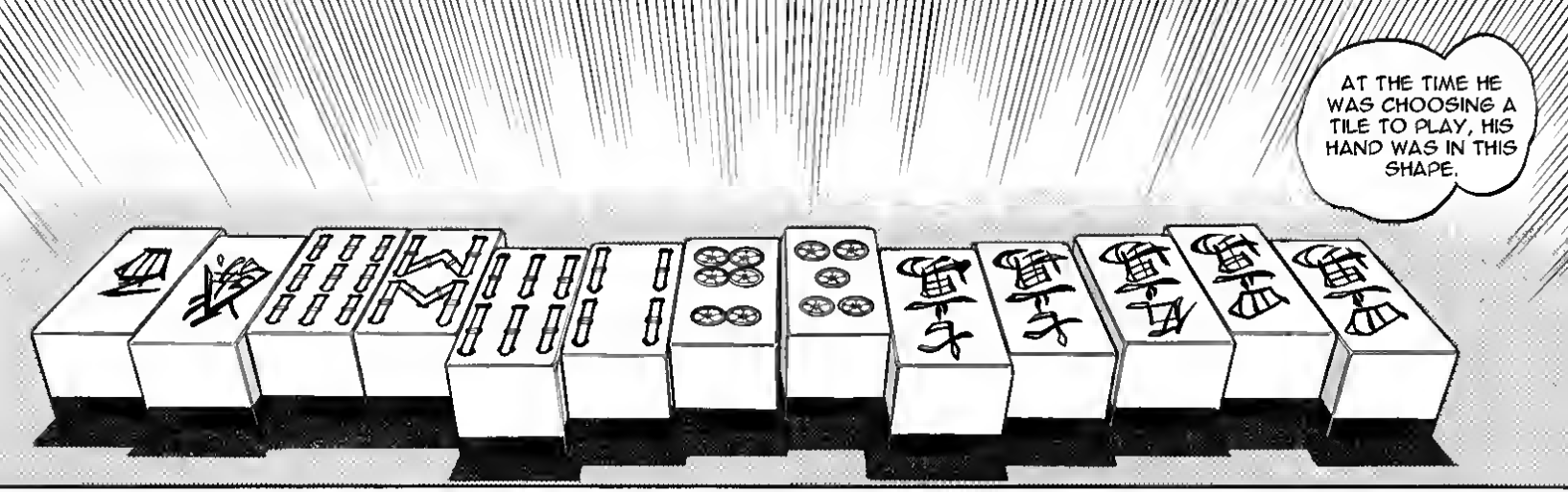
IN THE LAST ROUND OF THE MATCH JUST NOW...
...HOW DID YOU KNOW FOR SURE THAT URABE WOULD PLAY THE 9-PIN?
IF I DON'T KNOW FOR SURE HOW YOU CAME TO THAT CONCLU-SION...
...IT WILL KEEP ME UP AT NIGHT!
IT WOULD JUST BE TORTUR-OUS!
IF YOU COULD JUST TELL ME THAT...
...IT WOULD BE VERY KIND OF YOU!
YOU SEE?

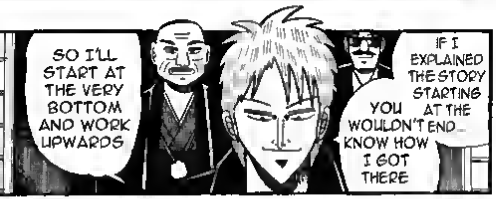
HMM?
DID THE GAME GET PUT AWAY ALREADY?
SIGH
……
I'M ASKING IF THE GAME WAS LEFT ALONE
AH, YES, YES!
NO PROBLEMS THERE!
I KNEW TO DO THAT MUCH!

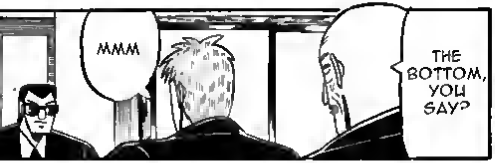

I CAN SPARE 5 MINUTES
LET'S GO THERE, THEN
GOOD, GOOD…!!
'KAY
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO USE IT TO EXPLAIN!
THE TABLE WAS LEFT AS IT WAS WHEN YOU LEFT!
THE OTHERS ARE ALREADY GONE, BUT……

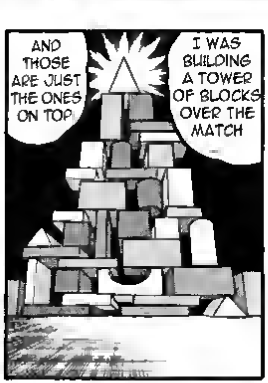

BACK IN YOUR ROUND AS DEALER……
THAT'S RIGHT……
THIS IS JUST HOW IT WAS.
スッ…
カラッ

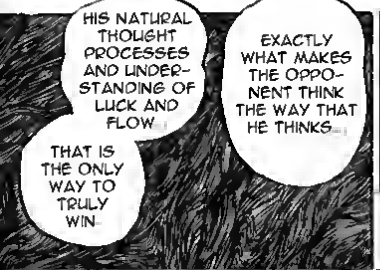

IT LOOKED JUST LIKE THIS FROM YOUR POINT OF VIEW!
東
中
南
三萬
SIR.
.....
HEY.
.....
THAT THE 2-PIN WOULD BE PLAYED?
SO, NOW, HOW DID YOU KNOW...


AT THE TIME HE WAS CHOOSING A TILE TO PLAY, HIS HAND WAS IN THIS SHAPE.


SO I'LL START AT THE VERY BOTTOM AND WORK UPWARDS
IF I EXPLAINED THE STORY STARTING AT THE END... YOU WOULDN'T KNOW HOW I GOT THERE


MMM
THE BOTTOM, YOU SAY?


I WAS BUILDING A TOWER OF BLOCKS OVER THE MATCH
AND THOSE ARE JUST THE ONES ON TOP


EXACTLY WHAT MAKES THE OPPONENT THINK THE WAY THAT HE THINKS...
HIS NATURAL THOUGHT PROCESSES AND UNDERSTANDING OF LUCK AND FLOW...
THAT IS THE ONLY WAY TO TRULY WIN.

YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND...
IN ORDER TO WIN IN MAHJONG...
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART.

BEFORE EVEN THAT...
WELL, NO

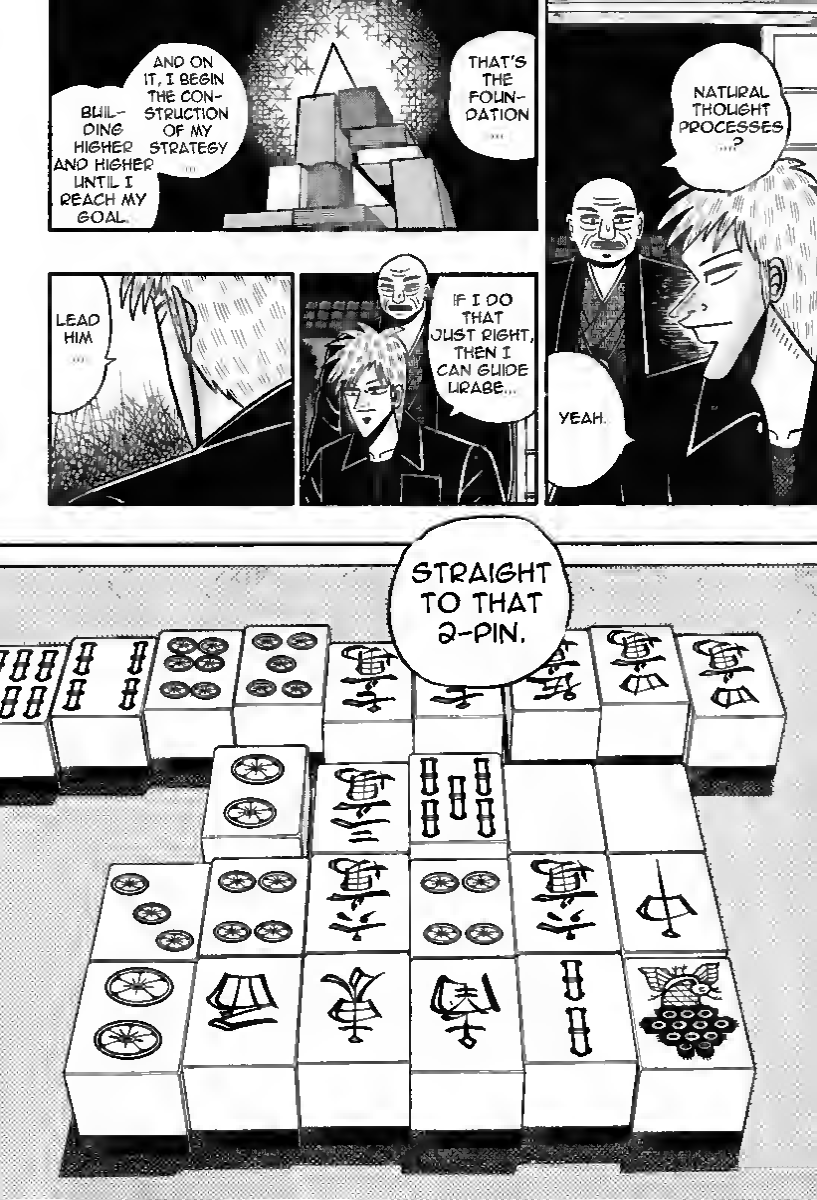
SO, EVEN KNOWING WHAT ALL OF HIS TILES WERE, HOW WOULD YOU KNOW HE'D PLAY THE 2-PIN FROM AMONG THEM?

AS YOU CAN SEE, HE HAD A RATHER WIDE VARIETY OF TILES TO CHOOSE FROM.
THERE WEREN'T ANY SAFE TILES, BUT...

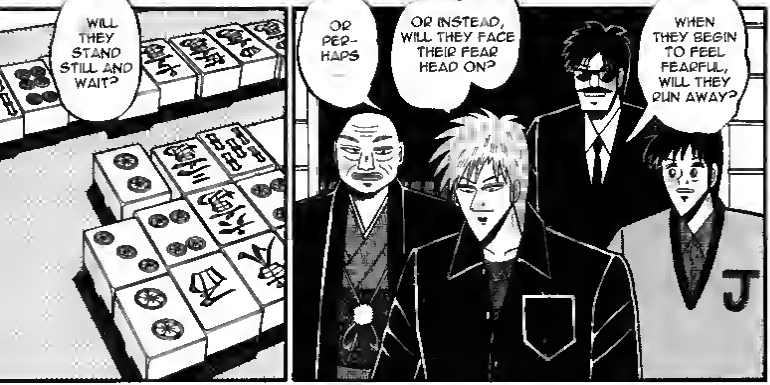
WE HAVE TO DIVE BELOW THE SURFACE...
...HOW I KNEW THAT HE WOULD PLAY THE 2-PIN OUT OF ALL OF THOSE 14 TILES...

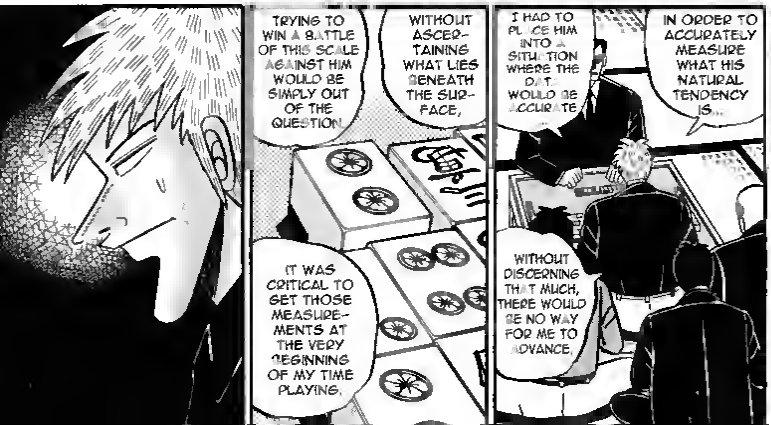
AND MOREOVER...
IF YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW I KNEW THAT HE HAD A 2-PIN...

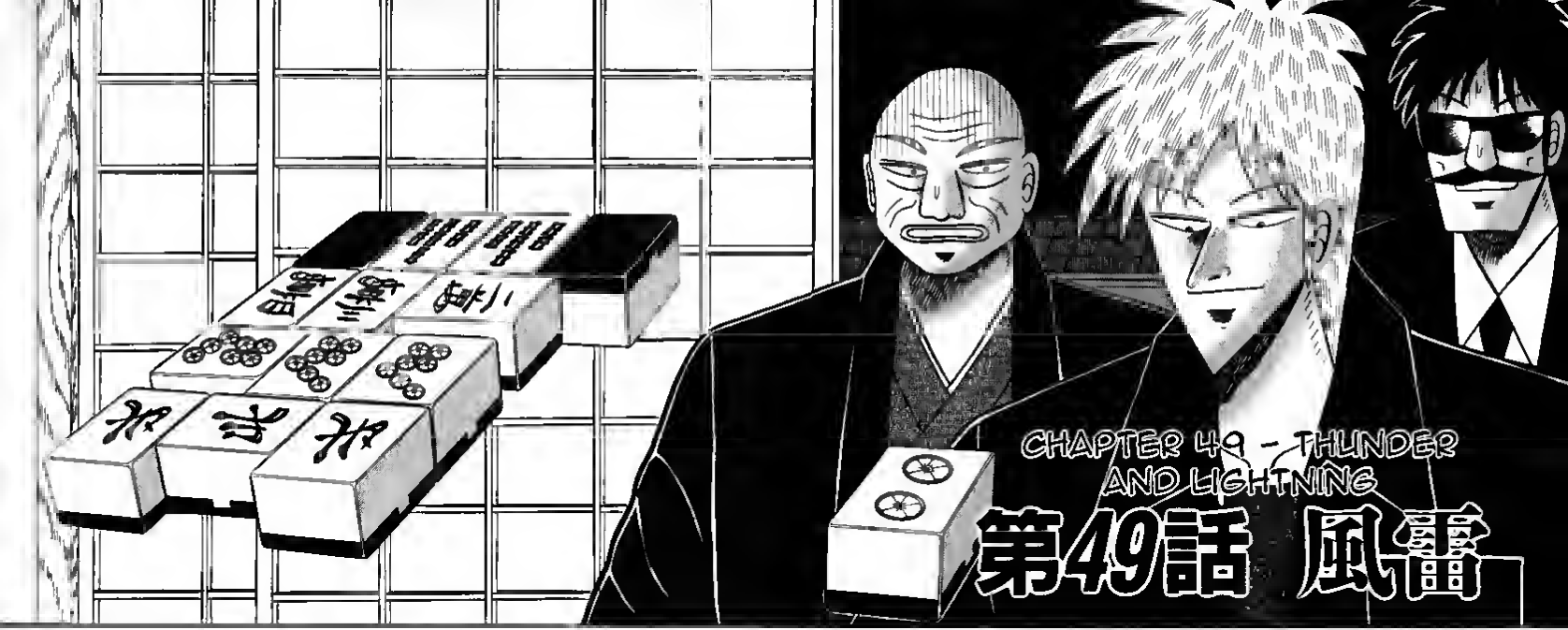
KUMICHOU...
HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT HE EVEN HAD A 2-PIN IN HIS HAND TO BEGIN WITH?


BUILDING HIGHER AND HIGHER UNTIL I REACH MY GOAL.
AND ON IT, I BEGIN THE CONSTRUCTION OF MY STRATEGY ...
THAT'S THE FOUNDATION ...
NATURAL THOUGHT PROCESSES ...?
YEAH.
IF I DO THAT JUST RIGHT, THEN I CAN GUIDE URABE...
LEAD HIM ...
STRAIGHT TO THAT 2-PIN.

WHENEVER PEOPLE ARE CONFRONTED WITH DANGER
THEIR TRUE NATURES TEND TO SHOW THEMSELVES.


WILL THEY STAND STILL AND WAIT?
OR PER-HAPS
OR INSTEAD, WILL THEY FACE THEIR FEAR HEAD ON?
WHEN THEY BEGIN TO FEEL FEARFUL, WILL THEY RUN AWAY?


TRYING TO WIN A BATTLE OF THIS SCALE AGAINST HIM WOULD BE SIMPLY OUT OF THE QUESTION!
WITHOUT ASCER-TAINING WHAT LIES BENEATH THE SUR-FACE,
I HAD TO PLACE HIM INTO A SITUATION WHERE THE DAT WOULD BE ACCURATE.
IN ORDER TO ACCURATELY MEASURE WHAT HIS NATURAL TENDENCY IS...
IT WAS CRITICAL TO GET THOSE MEASURE-MENTS AT THE VERY BEGINNING OF MY TIME PLAYING.
WITHOUT DISCERNING THAT MUCH, THERE WOULD BE NO WAY FOR ME TO ADVANCE.

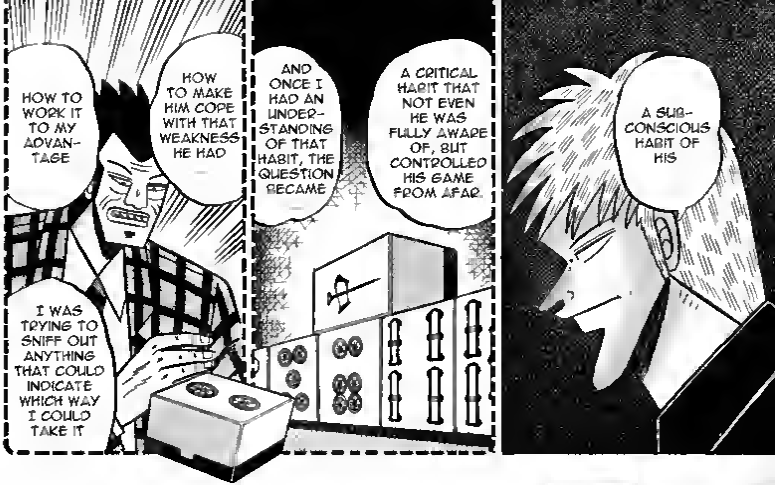


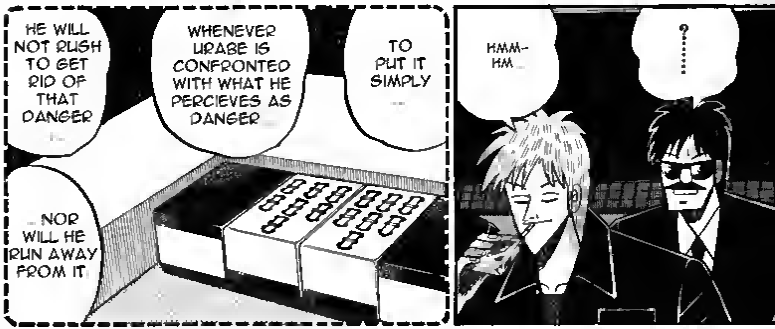
CHAPTER 49 - THUNDER AND LIGHTNING

第49話　風雷

WELL
THE HIGH WAGER ON THE MATCH MAY HAVE MADE HIM A BIT MORE CAREFUL THAN HE USUALLY WOULD BE, BUT EVEN SO...
HE WANTED TO SEE OSAMU'S SKILL FOR HIMSELF
GETTING A FEEL OF OSAMU'S SKILL LEVEL
FOR A PLAYER OF U-RABE'S CLASS,
SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT, EVEN WITH JUST A GLANCE... BUT STILL, HE WAITED
YEAH
SOMETHING IMPORTANT...?
I SENSED SOMETHING ABOUT HIM THAT WAS VERY IMPORTANT
THE MOMENT HE DID THAT

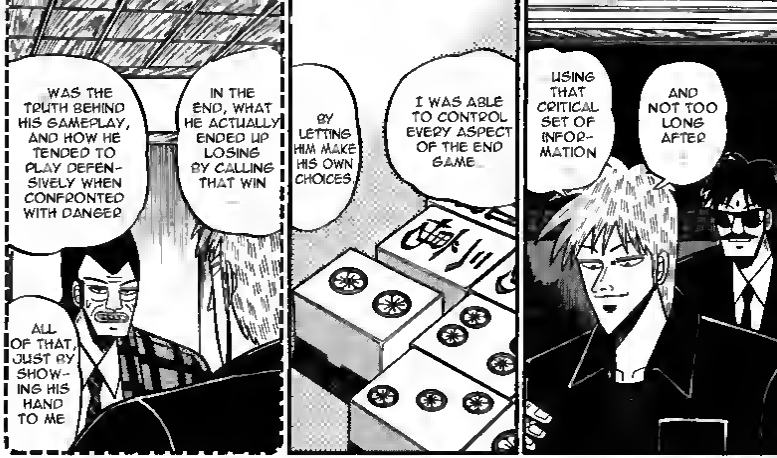
U-RABE DIDN'T GO AND ATTACK OSAMU RIGHT AWAY
AT THE TIME I DID SO,
AT THE BEGINNING,
SENDING OSAMU OUT AT U-RABE AS BAIT TO ATTRACT HIS SENSES
HMM-HM-HM
ダニッ…
HE SWAM AROUND HIM, FIRST.
WAS A CRUCIAL PART OF THAT MEASUREMENT.

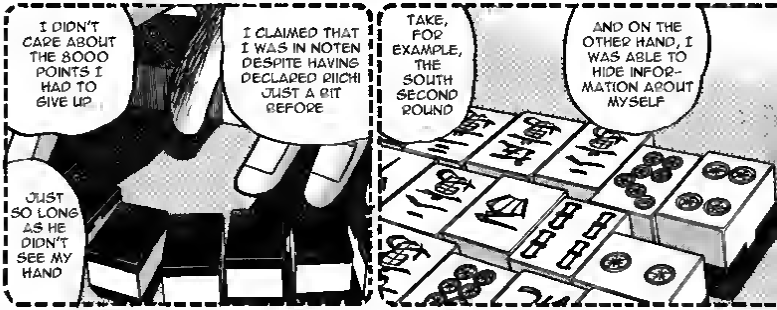

HOW TO WORK IT TO MY ADVANTAGE
HOW TO MAKE HIM COPE WITH THAT WEAKNESS HE HAD
I WAS TRYING TO SNIFF OUT ANYTHING THAT COULD INDICATE WHICH WAY I COULD TAKE IT
AND ONCE I HAD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THAT HABIT, THE QUESTION BECAME
A CRITICAL HABIT THAT NOT EVEN HE WAS FULLY AWARE OF, BUT CONTROLLED HIS GAME FROM AFAR
A SUBCONSCIOUS HABIT OF HIS


HE WILL NOT RUSH TO GET RID OF THAT DANGER
WHENEVER URABE IS CONFRONTED WITH WHAT HE PERCIEVES AS DANGER
TO PUT IT SIMPLY
NOR WILL HE RUN AWAY FROM IT
HMM-HM
?

THAT'S WHY HE STARTED OUT SIMPLY OBSERVING OSAMU
HE TENDS TO WAIT AND SEE HOW THINGS WILL TURN OUT
THE WAY URABE LIKES TO PLAY MAHJONG IS THROUGH A CONTROLLED USE OF POSTPONEMENT
BUT HE IS PRONE TO SIMPLY STANDING STILL
IT'S NOT EXACTLY A BAD THING

HE PROCEEDED TO TAKE EVERY DISCARD HE MADE WITH CAUTION
AT THE TIME WHERE I WAS CALLING RIICHI RIGHT AFTER HITTING TENPAI
HE STILL KEPT THAT TENDENCY
EVEN AFTER I STEPPED INTO OSAMU'S PLACE AND CONTINUED THE GAME
AND HE WAS ABLE TO GET A WIN BY JUST PLAYING WITH DEFENSE AS THE FIRST PRIORITY
IT WORKED OUT TO HIS FAVOR
HE SURE DID
HE LOST SOMETHING ?
HE GAVE UP SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT
BUT IN DOING THAT
EVERYTHING ABOUT HIS GAMEPLAY METHODS ROSE TO THE SURFACE
ALL OF THOSE HABITS AND TENDENCIES
...AND WHICH TILES HE THOUGHT WOULD PASS
WHICH TILES HE HAD TO HOLD ON TO
...AND WHAT KINDS OF HANDS HE COULD GET BY JUST PLAYING THOSE
HE REVEALED WHICH TILES HE THOUGHT WOULD BE SAFE


WAS THE TRUTH BEHIND HIS GAMEPLAY, AND HOW HE TENDED TO PLAY DEFENSIVELY WHEN CONFRONTED WITH DANGER
IN THE END, WHAT HE ACTUALLY ENDED UP LOSING BY CALLING THAT WIN
ALL OF THAT, JUST BY SHOWING HIS HAND TO ME
BY LETTING HIM MAKE HIS OWN CHOICES
I WAS ABLE TO CONTROL EVERY ASPECT OF THE END GAME
USING THAT CRITICAL SET OF INFORMATION
AND NOT TOO LONG AFTER

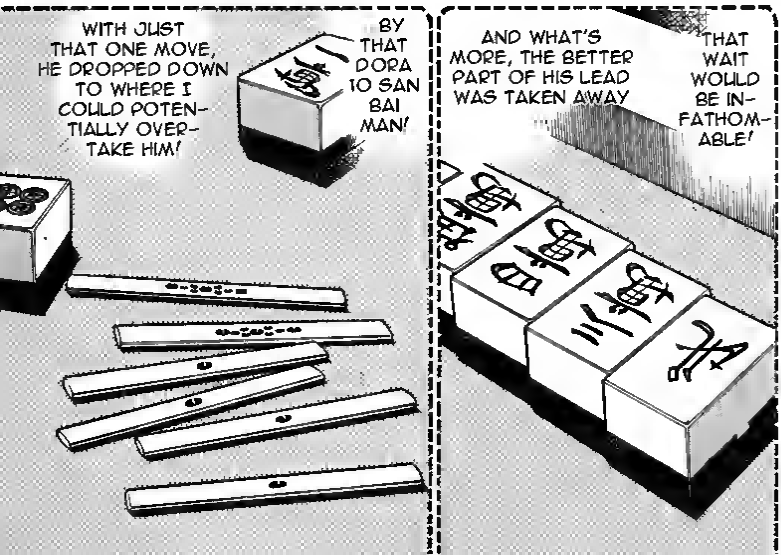

I DIDN'T CARE ABOUT THE 8000 POINTS I HAD TO GIVE UP
I CLAIMED THAT I WAS IN NOTEN DESPITE HAVING DECLARED RIICHI JUST A BIT BEFORE
JUST SO LONG AS HE DIDN'T SEE MY HAND
TAKE, FOR EXAMPLE, THE SOUTH SECOND ROUND
AND ON THE OTHER HAND, I WAS ABLE TO HIDE INFORMATION ABOUT MYSELF

BUT IT FELL FLAT ON ITS FACE WHEN HE HAD NOTHING TO WORK WITH
HE PLAYED WITH HIS STYLE OF RESERVATION IN ORDER TO TRY AND GET SOME INFORMATION ON HIS OPPONENT
IN ORDER TO BRING THAT SITUATION ABOUT
I GOT THE BETTER END OF THE DEAL
BUT THE REAL ADVANTAGE WAS MINE, HAVING NOT GIVEN ANY INFORMATION AWAY
URABE GOT THE APPARENT ADVANTAGE BY SECURING AN EXTRA 8000 POINTS OVER ME
WHEN THAT HAPPENED

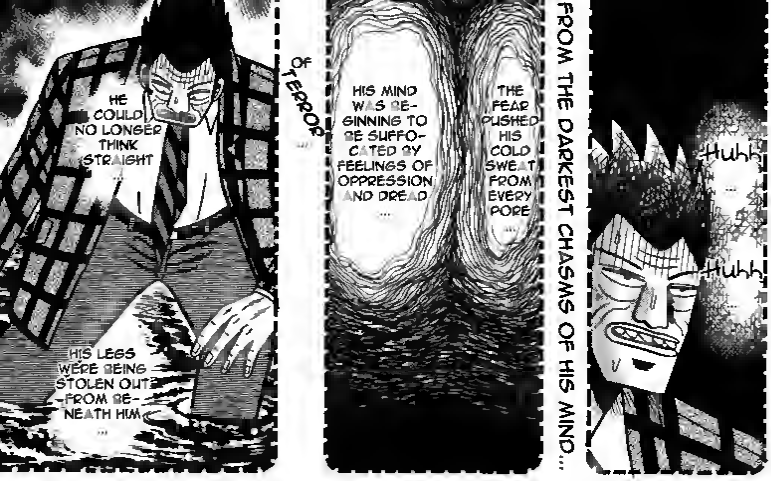
..I MADE THE SUU AN KOU OPEN RIICHI.
IN THE ROUND AFTER THAT
IT WAS A PRE-REQUI-SITE.
I HAD TO PLAY THE WAY I DID
I WOULD NOT PER-MIT ANYTHING SHORT OF A SUU AN KOU
SOME-THING THAT HE WAS UNABLE TO UNDER-STAND
A 2ND, AND THEN A 3RD
I LET MANY OF MY WINNING TILES GO BY
AND WHAT WAS MORE ...
THAT DEALING SIMPLY DEFIED ALL OF HIS ANALYSIS.
BEFORE, IT HAD SEEMED IMPOS-SIBLE
HE WAS COMPLETELY STUMPED AS TO WHAT MY INTEN-TIONS WERE
AFTER THAT E-MAN, URABE'S LOGIC AND REASON WOULD NO LONGER DO HIM ANY GOOD.
WHA ..?!
..AND MA-NAGED TO GET AN INCREDIBLE LEAD AS FAR AS POINTS GO
HE SLIPPED THROUGH THAT ROUND IN THE END

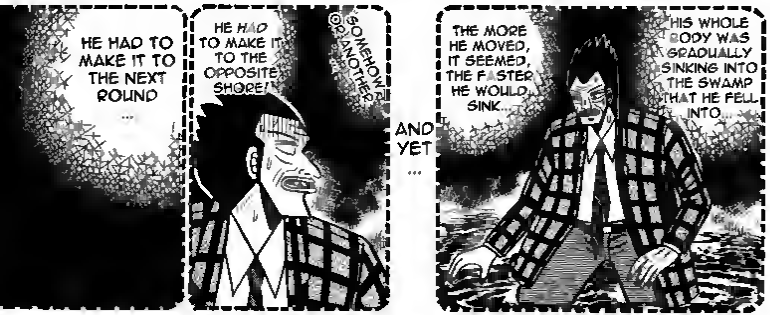
IN THE FIRST HONBA OF THE SOUTH SECOND ROUND, IT WAS A MONSTROUS 70,000 POINTS OVER ME
BUT HE WAS ABLE TO REST MORE EASILY WITH HIS LEAD
AND THAT IMPRESSION WOULD NOT DISAPPEAR SO EASILY
BUT HIS IMPRESSION OF ME GOT EVEN MORE FOGGY
HE BEGAN TO RUN AWAY
IN ORDER TO PRESERVE HIS LEAD OVER ME
WITH THAT THOUGHT IN MIND
ALL I DID WAS ATTACK WHILE HE WAS RUNNING!
HUH ...?!
RON.

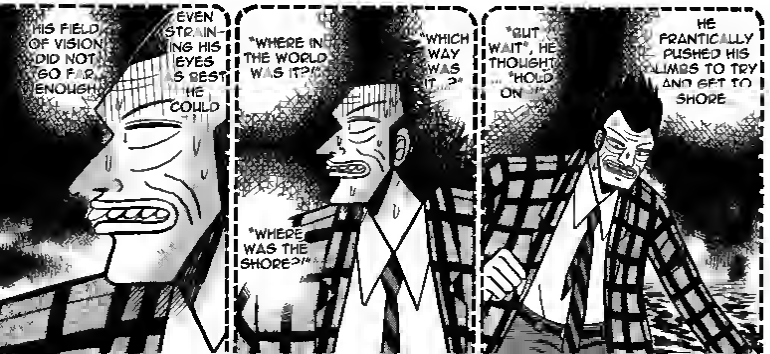
TO A NORMAL PERSON...
WITH THAT COINCIDENTAL PEI SINGLE WAIT!


WITH JUST THAT ONE MOVE, HE DROPPED DOWN TO WHERE I COULD POTENTIALLY OVERTAKE HIM!
BY THAT DORA 10 SAN BAI MAN!
AND WHAT'S MORE, THE BETTER PART OF HIS LEAD WAS TAKEN AWAY
THAT WAIT WOULD BE INFATHOMABLE!

HE'S GETTING QUITE CLOSE TO CATCHING UP
ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN DO THIS?
URABE...
DON'T WORRY YOURSELF
.....
HMM-HM
...BUT IN TRUTH, HE WAS TREMBLING BENEATH THAT TOUGH EXTERIOR HE MADE FOR HIMSELF.
URABE MADE HIMSELF APPEAR AS THOUGH HE WAS NOT WORRIED BY WHAT HAD JUST HAPPENED...
...AT THAT TIME,
...BUT HE HAD YET TO SO MUCH AS SEE HIS OPPONENT'S ABILITY.
THIS WAS A GAME WORTH AN INCREDIBLE AMOUNT OF MONEY FOR HIM...
...HE STILL HAD NO IDEA HOW I WOULD PLAY...
AND EVEN THOUGH HE HAD HAD ALL THREE OF THE PREVIOUS ROUNDS TO OBSERVE ME...
...I WAS BEGINNING TO CATCH UP TO HIM.
THE TYPE OF PRESSURE HE WAS FEELING HAD CHANGED...


FROM THE DARKEST CHASMS OF HIS MIND...
Huhh...
Huhh...
THE FEAR PUSHED HIS COLD SWEAT FROM EVERY PORE...
HIS MIND WAS BEGINNING TO BE SUFFOCATED BY FEELINGS OF OPPRESSION AND DREAD...
OF TERROR...
HE COULD NO LONGER THINK STRAIGHT...
HIS LEGS WERE BEING STOLEN OUT FROM BENEATH HIM...


HIS WHOLE BODY WAS GRADUALLY SINKING INTO THE SWAMP THAT HE FELL INTO...
THE MORE HE MOVED, IT SEEMED, THE FASTER HE WOULD SINK...
AND YET...
SOMEHOW OR ANOTHER
HE HAD TO MAKE IT TO THE OPPOSITE SHORE!
HE HAD TO MAKE IT TO THE NEXT ROUND...


HE FRANTICALLY PUSHED HIS LIMBS TO TRY AND GET TO SHORE
"BUT WAIT", HE THOUGHT... "HOLD ON..."
"WHICH WAY WAS IT...?"
"WHERE IN THE WORLD WAS IT?!"
"WHERE WAS THE SHORE?!"
EVEN STRAINING HIS EYES AS BEST HE COULD...
HIS FIELD OF VISION DID NOT GO FAR ENOUGH...

HE BECAME PARA-LYZED WITH FEAR.
HE COULD NOT TELL WHICH WAY HE CAME FROM... EVERY DIRECTION LOOKED THE SAME ...

FACED WITH THAT, THE ONLY THING HE COULD DO
IN THE END, HE HAD TO RELY ON WHAT HE KNEW
ガニ
HMM-HM-HM
FUCK ...

SHEER REASON AND LOGIC... NOTHING MORE.
ALL HE COULD DO WAS APPLY HIS EXPERIENCES IN PAST GAMES OF MAHJONG ...
AND DO WHAT HIS REASON TOLD HIM TO DO.
HOWEVER ...
THAT VERY RATIONAL MINDSET ...
...CAN BE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF, IN AND OF ITSELF!
SINCE I WAS THE ONE CHASING AFTER HIM...
GETTING HIM IN THAT MINDSET WAS MY GOAL FROM THE OUTSET
THAT WAS ALL THAT I HAD TO DO...
ONCE I HAD HIM THINKING LIKE THAT...
...HE COULD DO NOTHING BUT BECOME MY PREY!
ジャラ・・
カシャッ

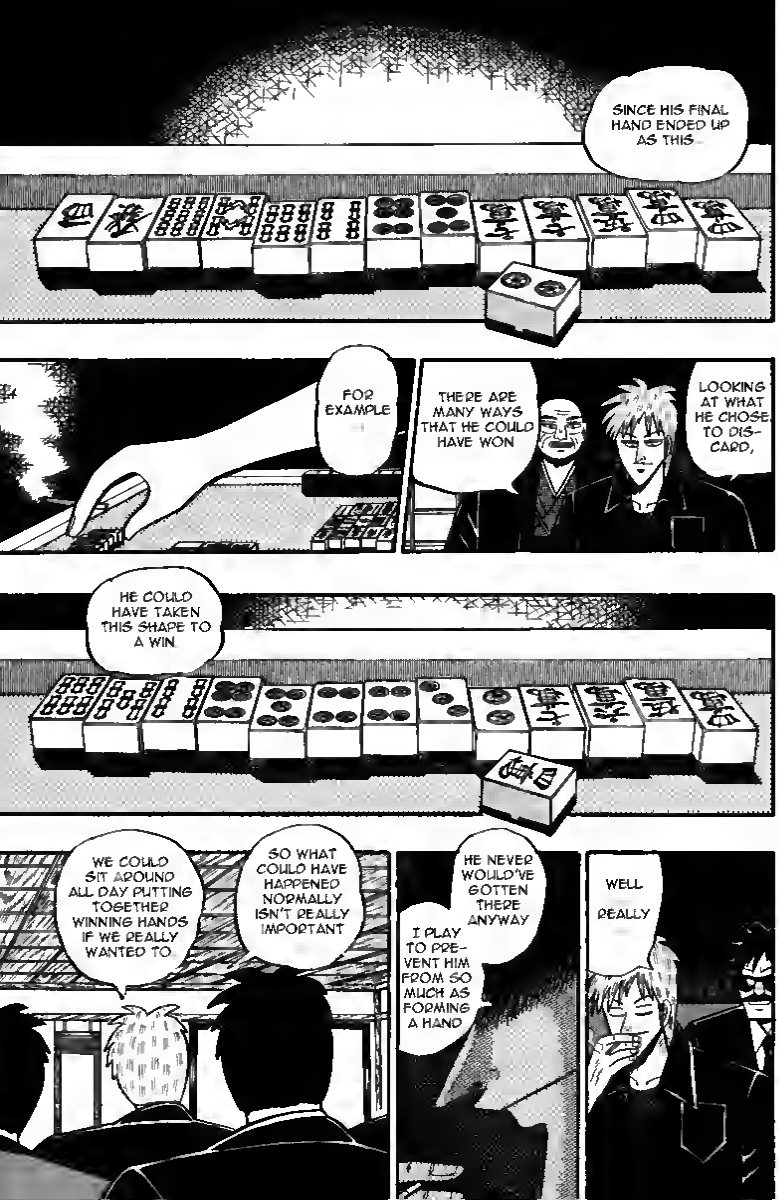
THE FINAL ROUND, THE SOUTH FOURTH ROUND
AND THEN, AT THE VERY END...
IF I COULD GET A DEALER HANEMAN TSUMO OR A DIRECT HIT OFF OF HIM...
I WOULD HAVE MADE MY COME-BACK
REACHED 32,500 POINTS
THE MATCH IN WHICH THE POINT DIFFERNCE BETWEEN URARE AND I
HIS ONLY MOTIVATION IN DOING SO...
...WAS THE LOGIC THAT HE WAS FORCED TO RELY ON.
HE DID INDEED... BUT EVEN SO...
HE BEGAN TO GET MUCH MORE AGGRESSIVE
RIGHT FROM THE START OF THAT ROUND...
HOW-EVER
UP UNTIL THAT MOMENT, URARE WAS SIMPLY RIDING HIS TIME AND WAITING IT OUT...
...IF THE SIT-UATION CALLS FOR IT
CAN BE TURNED RIGHT BACK AT THE AG-GRESSOR
FALSE AGGRESSION LIKE THAT...
THAT WAS NOT THE KIND OF MOTIVATION THAT COULD TAKE HIM TO A WIN

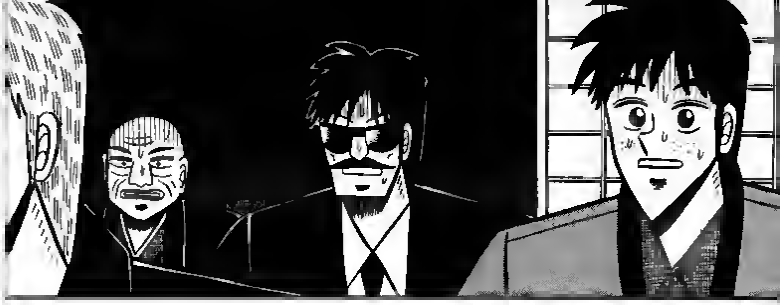
KAN.
AFTER MY DORA 4 WAS REVEALED...
URAGE'S FACE REVEALED AN EMOTION THAT WAS VERY BENEFICIAL TO ME...
SHOCK.
URGH...!
HE COULD NOT ADVANCE.
HE COULD NOT TAKE ANY CHANCES... SO HE WAS FORCED TO FIGHT BACK AT ME WITH REASON, EVEN MORE SO THAN BEFORE.
IF I WERE TO MAKE A TSUMO AT THAT POINT, THERE WAS A VERY GOOD CHANCE FOR IT TO BE A HANEMAN.
HE REMAINED FIRM
BUT EVEN AFTER THAT, HE REFUSED TO GIVE UP.
HE MOVED AROUND IT
...HE WOULD NOT CHARGE STRAIGHT AT ME TO RECLAIM IT.
BUT EVEN THEN...

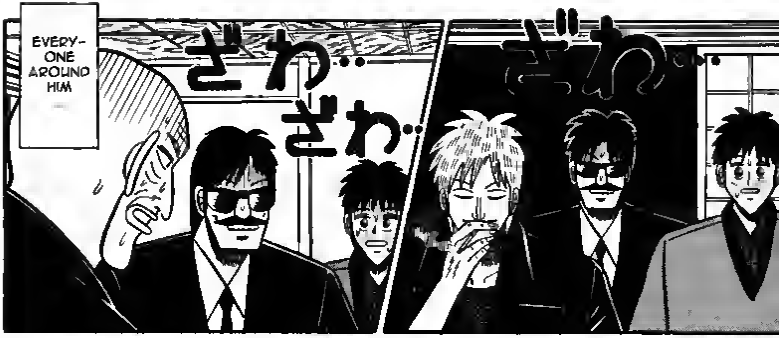
WITH HIS 2-PIN.
IN TRUTH, THAT 2-PIN WAS INDICATIVE OF HIS TRUE NATURE
WHEN UP AGAINST DANGER, HIS TRUE NATURE TAKES CONTROL.
THAT IS WHY HE DECIDED TO FREEZE IN HIS TRACKS
TRULY
HE DOES NOT FIGHT, BUT NEITHER DOES HE FLEE
HE CANNOT HELP BUT STAND STILL IN TIMES SUCH AS THESE
THAT FACT IS ROOTED DEEP IN HIS HEART
ONCE I SAW THAT HE HAD MADE THAT DECISION
...IT BECAME APPARENT THAT HIS WEAKER SIDE WAS BEGINNING TO EMERGE
IT CAME OVER HIM ALL OF A SUDDEN...
AFTER THAT, HE TOOK TO DISCARDING EVERY SINGLE SAFE TILE THAT CAME HIS WAY
AND ONLY A FEW TURNS LATER
...I MADE A 2-3-4 MAN CHI...
IN OTHER WORDS, I EXPOSED THAT I NEITHER HAD TOI TOI NOR HON ITSU

SO ALL HE NEEDED TO LOOK OUT FOR WAS A DIRECT HIT MANGAN.
IT COULD NO LONGER REACH A HANEMAN TSUMO ...
MY HAND W S LIMITED DOWN TO TANYAO OR FANPAI, DORA 4.
SO IN OTHER WORDS ...
AND NOT LONG AFTER, HE WAS ABLE TO SEE WHERE ALL OF THE DORA TILES WERE...
...HE THREW AWAY THE 4-PIN.
AND SO HE WAS OUT OF IT.
HE FIGURED THERE WAS NO LONGER ANY NEED TO WIN THIS PARTICULAR HAND ...
AND AFTERWARDS, HE DREW A RISKY TILE
THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE ON HIS MIND AT THAT MOMENT
NO MATTER WHAT, HE HAD TO SAVE FACE
IT BECAME PAINFUL FOR HIM ...
HE RAN FROM ME IN THE NAME OF PRESERVATION.
HE COULD ONLY THINK OF DELAYING IT UNTIL THE NEXT GAME, SO HE COULD WIN THERE ...
IT COULD BE CALLED A BAD HABIT THAT HE EXHIBITED
HE NO LONGER HAD ANY INTENTION OF GOING AT ME DIRECTLY AND TAKING THE GAME BACK BY FORCE
WAS A SIGN OF HIM STANDING STILL AND OBSERVING
THIS 4-PIN, AS WELL ...

...HE HAD GIVEN UP.
HE HAD DECIDED TO FOLD ENTIRELY.
HIS DISCARDS WERE OF NOTHING BUT SAFE TILE AFTER SAFE TILE.
AND, JUST LIKE I THOUGHT, ONCE HE LET THAT 4-PIN GO
WHEN IT CAME RIGHT DOWN TO IT, HE COULD DO NOTHING BUT TUCK HIS TAIL BETWEEN HIS LEGS AND RUN.
AND WITH THAT, ANY CHANCE HE HAD OF WINNING THAT GAME VANISHED OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH.
...AND SAID THAT I WAS PURCHASING THE COMING 3 ROUNDS.
WHEN I PAID 8000 POINTS FOR THE CHOMBO PENALTY.
IN THE SOUTH SECOND ROUND,
...HE HAD DECIDED TO INSTEAD MAINTAIN HIS OFFENSIVE.
IF, BACK AT THAT TURN
I WOULD NOT HAVE KNOWN HOW THE MATCH WOULD END
WHAT I WAS DOING BY HIDING ALL OF THE INFORMATION ABOUT MYSELF
...WAS GETTING HIM INTO THE RIGHT MINDSET TO RETREAT
IN PARTICULAR, THE 4-PIN ON THE 9TH TURN
FROM THE CHUN ON THE 7TH TURN TO THE 4-PIN ON THE 9TH
I WAS REFERRING TO THE 3 ROUNDS OF DISCARDING IN THAT HAND

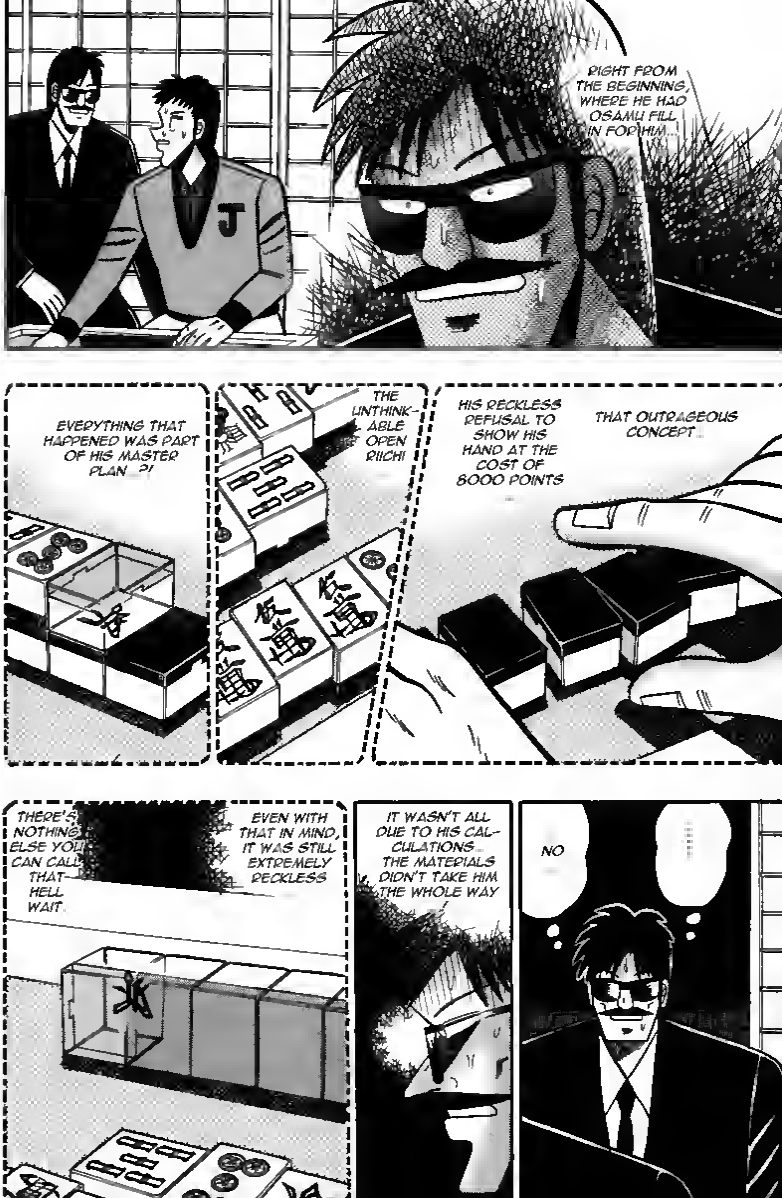

SINCE HIS FINAL HAND ENDED UP AS THIS...
FOR EXAMPLE
THERE ARE MANY WAYS THAT HE COULD HAVE WON
LOOKING AT WHAT HE CHOSE TO DISCARD,
HE COULD HAVE TAKEN THIS SHAPE TO A WIN
WE COULD SIT AROUND ALL DAY PUTTING TOGETHER WINNING HANDS IF WE REALLY WANTED TO.
SO WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED NORMALLY ISN'T REALLY IMPORTANT
I PLAY TO PREVENT HIM FROM SO MUCH AS FORMING A HAND
HE NEVER WOULD'VE GOTTEN THERE ANYWAY
WELL
REALLY

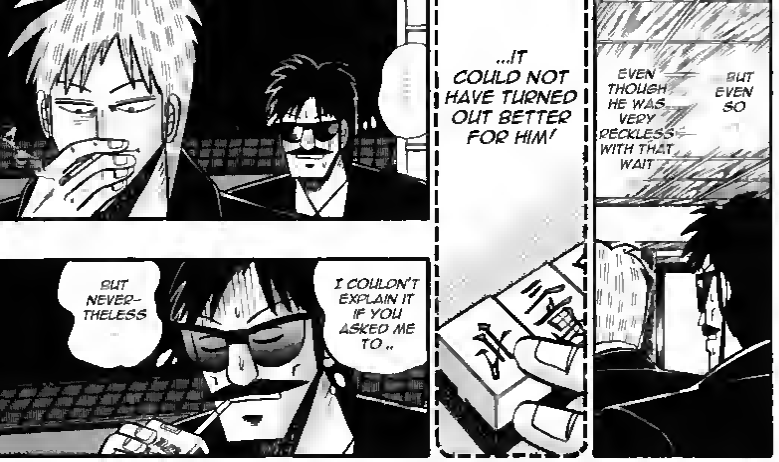


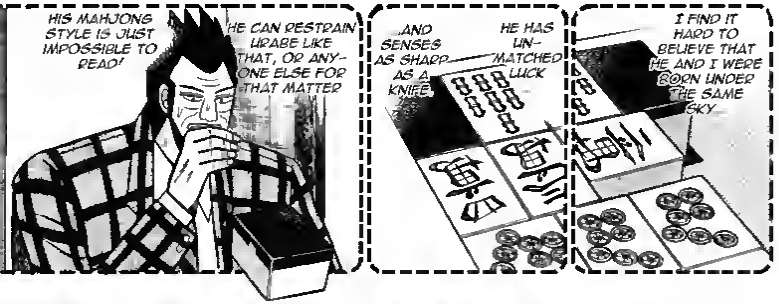

EVERY-ONE AROUND HIM...
ざわ…
ざわ…
ざわ…

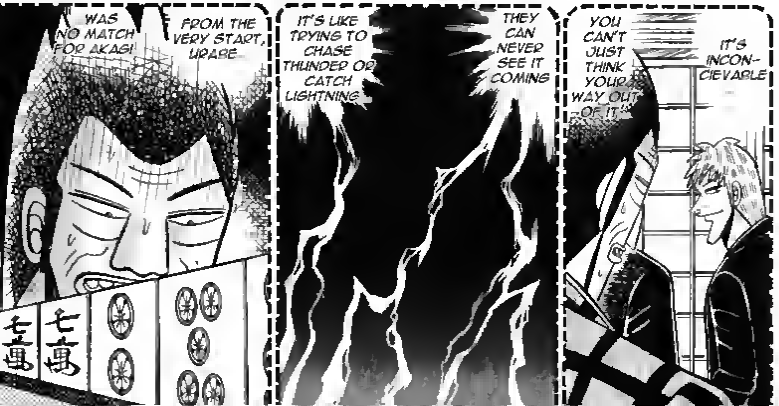
AKAGI'S REASON...
EVERYONE LISTENING BECAME MORE AT A LOSS FOR WORDS
AS AKAGI'S EXPLAIN-ATION GREW CLOSER AND CLO-SER TO ITS CLIMAX
THEY WERE LEFT IN AWE HEARING THE ENTITY THAT SILENTLY FLOWED THROUGH IT

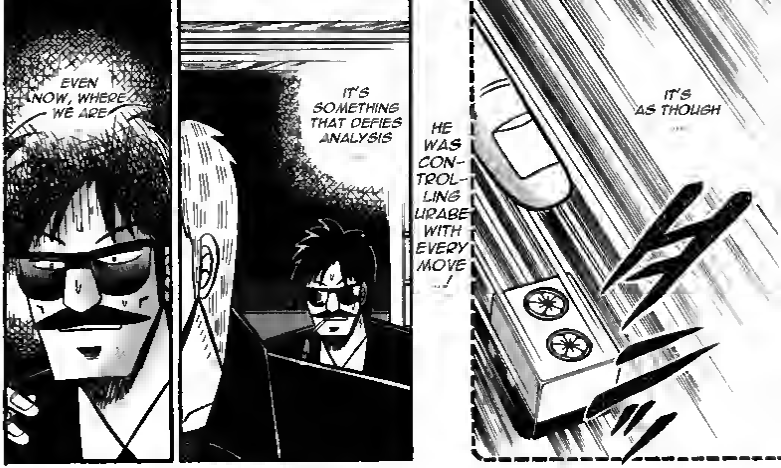
IT TOOK ALL OF THAT DATA AND GRADUALLY WORKED FROM THERE ...
IT WAS LIKE A LIVING MODE OF REASON.
AND THE MENTALITY HE HAD AT THE TIME, WHEN IT WAS MOST NEEDED
IT MEASURED URABE'S PULSE
IT WAS NOT BASED SOLELY IN PROBABILTY ...
THE WAY HE SO EASILY EXPLAINED HOW HE CONSTRUCTED EVERY ASPECT OF URABE'S MIND...
HE SEEMED AS IF HE WAS ON A HIGHER PLANE OF EXISTANCE.
AKAGI'S CLEAR, CONCISE WAY OF SPEAKING
IT WAS ...
WAS ALL LIKE PUTTING HIS CHESS PIECES IN THE BEST POSITION TO WIN ...?
EVERYTHING HE DID...
.....

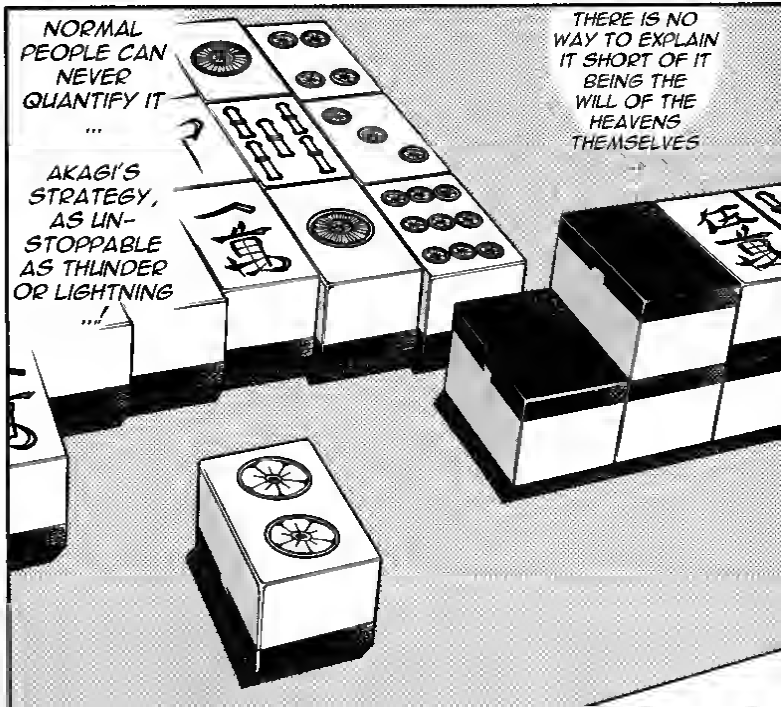

RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING, WHERE HE HAD OSAMU FILL IN FOR HIM...
EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED WAS PART OF HIS MASTER PLAN...?!
THE UNTHINKABLE OPEN RIICHI
HIS RECKLESS REFUSAL TO SHOW HIS HAND AT THE COST OF 8000 POINTS
THAT OUTRAGEOUS CONCEPT...
THERE'S NOTHING ELSE YOU CAN CALL THAT— HELL WAIT...
EVEN WITH THAT IN MIND, IT WAS STILL EXTREMELY RECKLESS
IT WASN'T ALL DUE TO HIS CALCULATIONS... THE MATERIALS DIDN'T TAKE HIM THE WHOLE WAY
NO...


AH!
...IT COULD NOT HAVE TURNED OUT BETTER FOR HIM!
EVEN THOUGH HE WAS VERY RECKLESS WITH THAT WAIT
BUT EVEN SO
BUT NEVER-THELESS
I COULDN'T EXPLAIN IT IF YOU ASKED ME TO..


HIS MAHJONG STYLE IS JUST IMPOSSIBLE TO READ!
HE CAN RESTRAIN URABE LIKE THAT, OR ANY-ONE ELSE FOR THAT MATTER
...AND SENSES AS SHARP AS A KNIFE
HE HAS UN-MATCHED LUCK
I FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT HE AND I WERE BORN UNDER THE SAME SKY


WAS NO MATCH FOR AKAGI
FROM THE VERY START, URABE
IT'S LIKE TRYING TO CHASE THUNDER OR CATCH LIGHTNING
THEY CAN NEVER SEE IT COMING
YOU CAN'T JUST THINK YOUR WAY OUT OF IT
IT'S INCON-CIEVABLE

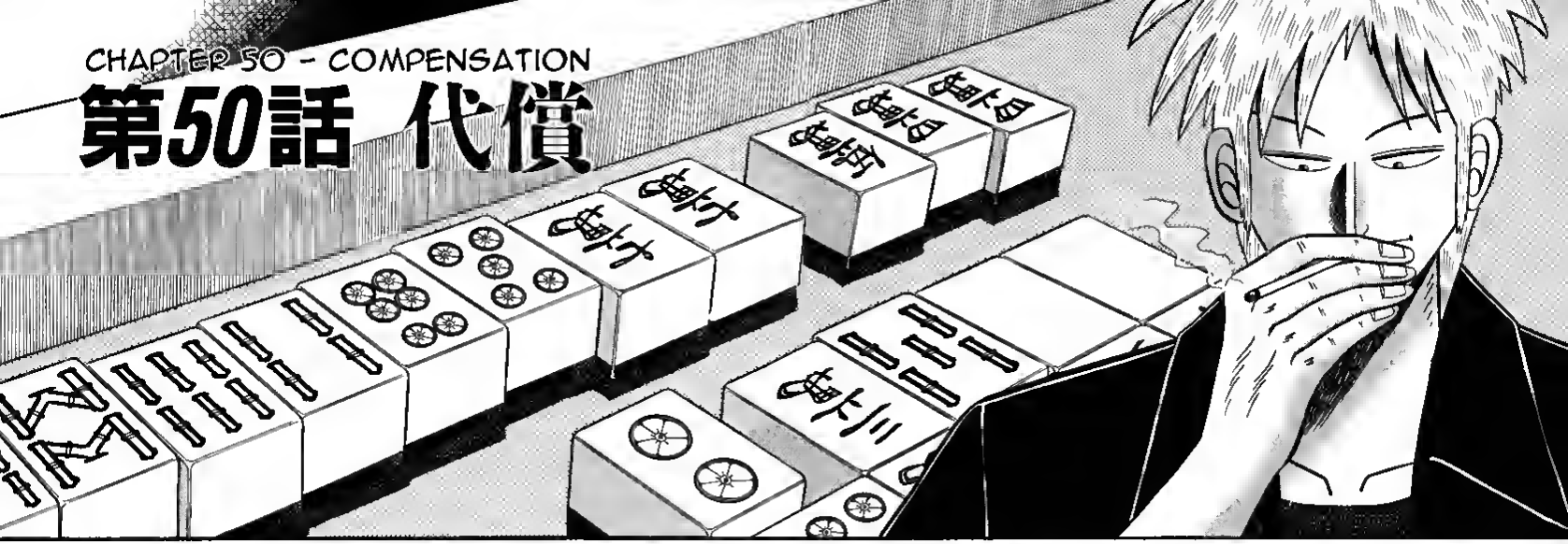

EVEN NOW, WHERE WE ARE...
IT'S SOMETHING THAT DEFIES ANALYSIS
HE WAS CONTROLLING URABE WITH EVERY MOVE...!
IT'S AS THOUGH...


NORMAL PEOPLE CAN NEVER QUANTIFY IT...
AKAGI'S STRATEGY, AS UNSTOPPABLE AS THUNDER OR LIGHTNING...!
THERE IS NO WAY TO EXPLAIN IT SHORT OF IT BEING THE WILL OF THE HEAVENS THEMSELVES

THIS 4-PIN MARKED WHERE THE CROSSROADS OF THE MATCH WERE
ALL THINGS CONSI-DERED...
URABE GOES ON THE DEFENSIVE FROM HERE, 100%
AFTER THAT DEAL...
HE DEALS NOTHING BUT SAFE TILE AFTER SAFE TILE...
HE'S OUT OF THE GAME WITH THAT

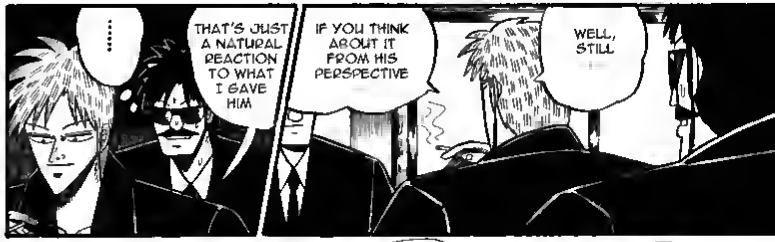
CHAPTER 50 - COMPENSATION

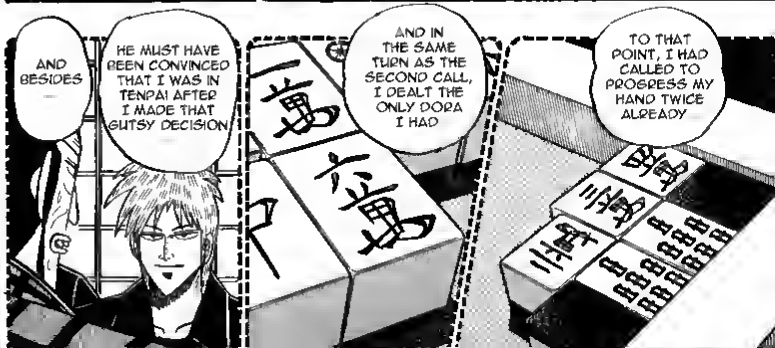
第50話 代償



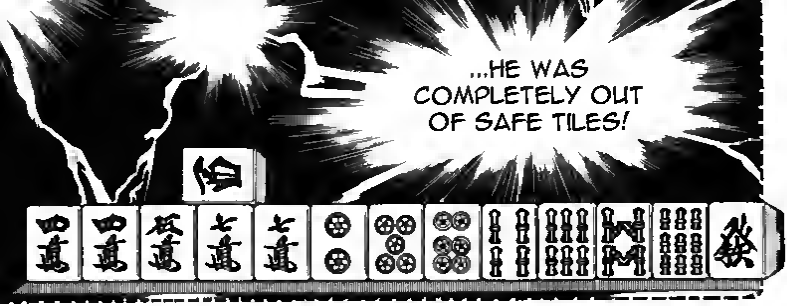
IT SEEMED TO HAVE A LARGE PROBABILITY OF BEING A TANYAO HAND.
AT THAT TIME, MY HAND
HE HAD TO ASSUME THAT I WAS IN TENPAI
HE COULD NOT MAKE ANY ASSUMPTIONS.
NOT EVEN HIS LIFE WOULD BE WORTH 32 MILLION YEN.
URABE WAS BETTING A GIGANTIC SUM OF MONEY

HE HAD TO PLAY HIS SAFE TILES AS SOON AS HE GOT THEM
HE COULD DO NOTHING ELSE
HE COULD NOT PLAY A SINGLE RISKY TILE
IN ORDER TO AVOID LOSING RIGHT THERE AND THEN
AND SO
IT WAS A 2-3-4 SAN SHOKU HAND
BUT THERE WAS STILL A SMALL CHANCE

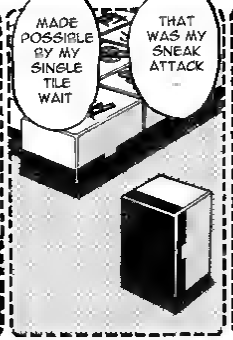


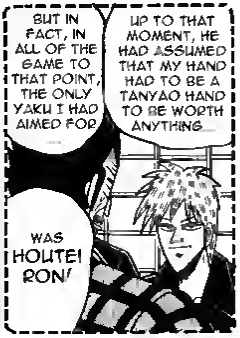

AND BESIDES
HE MUST HAVE BEEN CONVINCED THAT I WAS IN TENPAI AFTER I MADE THAT GUTSY DECISION
AND IN THE SAME TURN AS THE SECOND CALL, I DEALT THE ONLY DORA I HAD
TO THAT POINT, I HAD CALLED TO PROGRESS MY HAND TWICE ALREADY

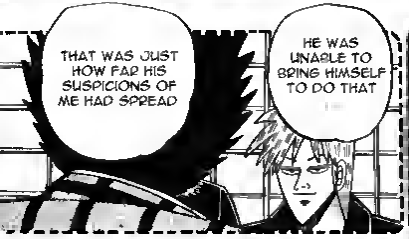
...A LONG WAYS FROM TENPAI, NO MATTER HOW YOU LOOK AT IT
BACK THEN MY HAND WAS STILL IN THIS SHAPE...
THAT VERY LOGICAL ASSUMPTION OF HIS
HOWEVER
...WAS ALSO HIS BIGGEST WEAKNESS
HE WAS STILL QUITE AFRAID
BUT HE WOULDN'T LET HIMSELF SO MUCH AS CONSIDER THAT POSSIBILITY...
HE HAD TO USE UP ALL OF HIS SAFE TILES...
IN ORDER TO TRY AND SURVIVE
AND ONCE HE HAD...
HE CONTINUED TO PLAY SAFE TILE AFTER USELESS SAFE TILE
ALTHOUGH THERE WAS REALLY NEVER ANY NEED TO...
RIGHT AT THE MOMENT HE MADE HIS FINAL DRAW
AFTER THAT DRAW HAD BEEN MADE...
KH...!
...IN THE FINAL MOMENTS OF THE GAME
HE RAN OUT OF THINGS THAT HE COULD DEAL EVEN RELATIVELY SAFELY...

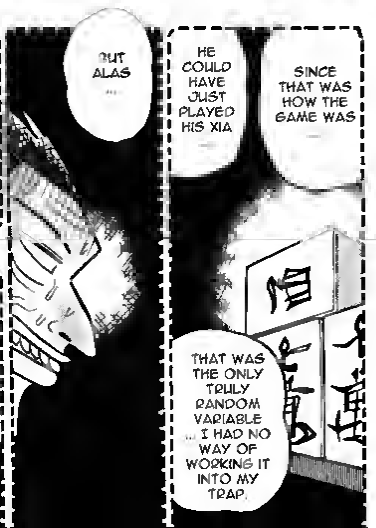

...HE WAS COMPLETELY OUT OF SAFE TILES!

THE GAME HAD ALREADY LONG SINCE SURPASSED HIS ABILITY TO READ ME, LET ALONE MY HAND
THERE WAS NOTHING HE COULD DO TO TELL WHAT IT WAS
.....

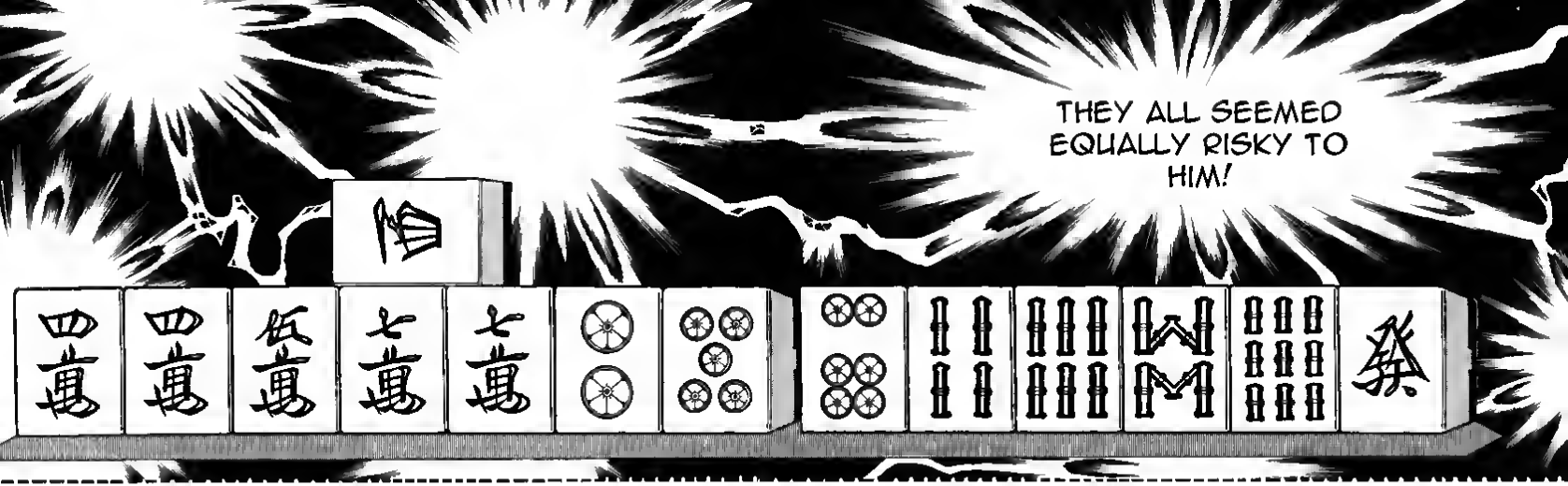

MADE POSSIBLE BY MY SINGLE TILE WAIT
THAT WAS MY SNEAK ATTACK

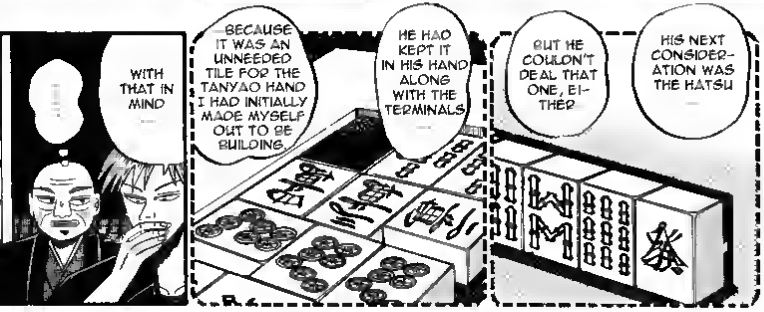

BUT IN FACT, IN ALL OF THE GAME TO THAT POINT, THE ONLY YAKU I HAD AIMED FOR
UP TO THAT MOMENT, HE HAD ASSUMED THAT MY HAND HAD TO BE A TANYAO HAND TO BE WORTH ANYTHING
WAS HOUTEI RON!

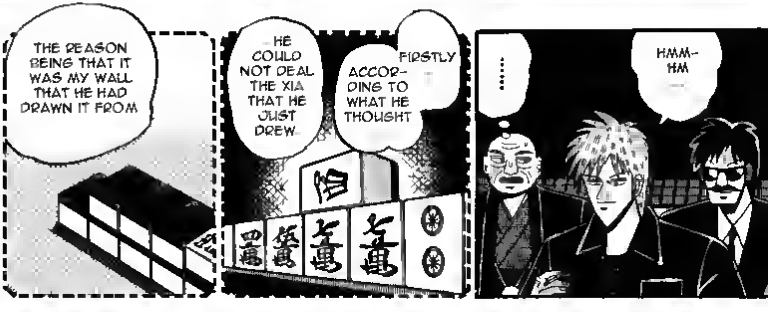

THAT WAS JUST HOW FAR HIS SUSPICIONS OF ME HAD SPREAD
HE WAS UNABLE TO BRING HIMSELF TO DO THAT

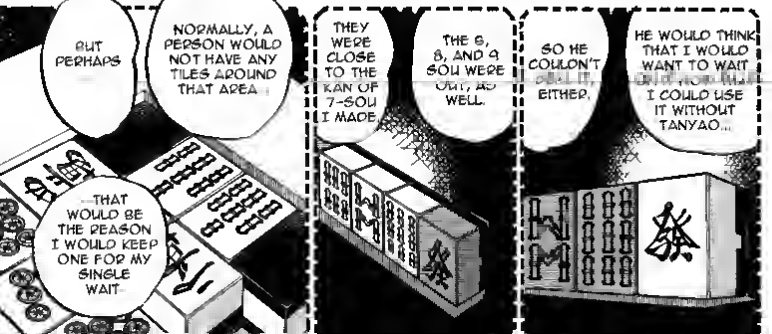

BUT ALAS ...
HE COULD HAVE JUST PLAYED HIS XIA
SINCE THAT WAS HOW THE GAME WAS
THAT WAS THE ONLY TRULY RANDOM VARIABLE ... I HAD NO WAY OF WORKING IT INTO MY TRAP.

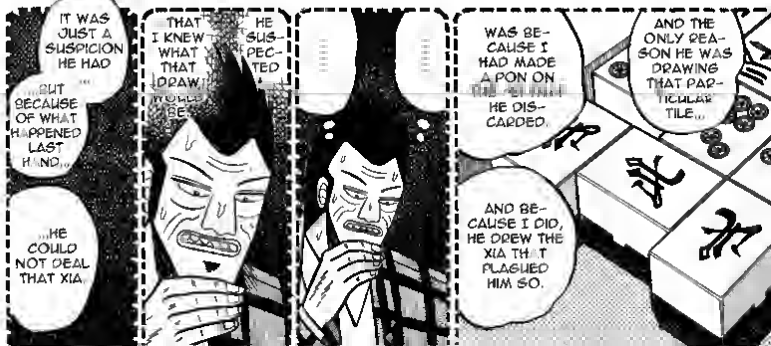
IT WAS AS IF HIS HEART ITSELF HAD BECOME INFECTED BY SUSPICION
AT THAT TIME, EVERY TILE IN HIS HAND SEEMED LIKE A LANDMINE TO HIM

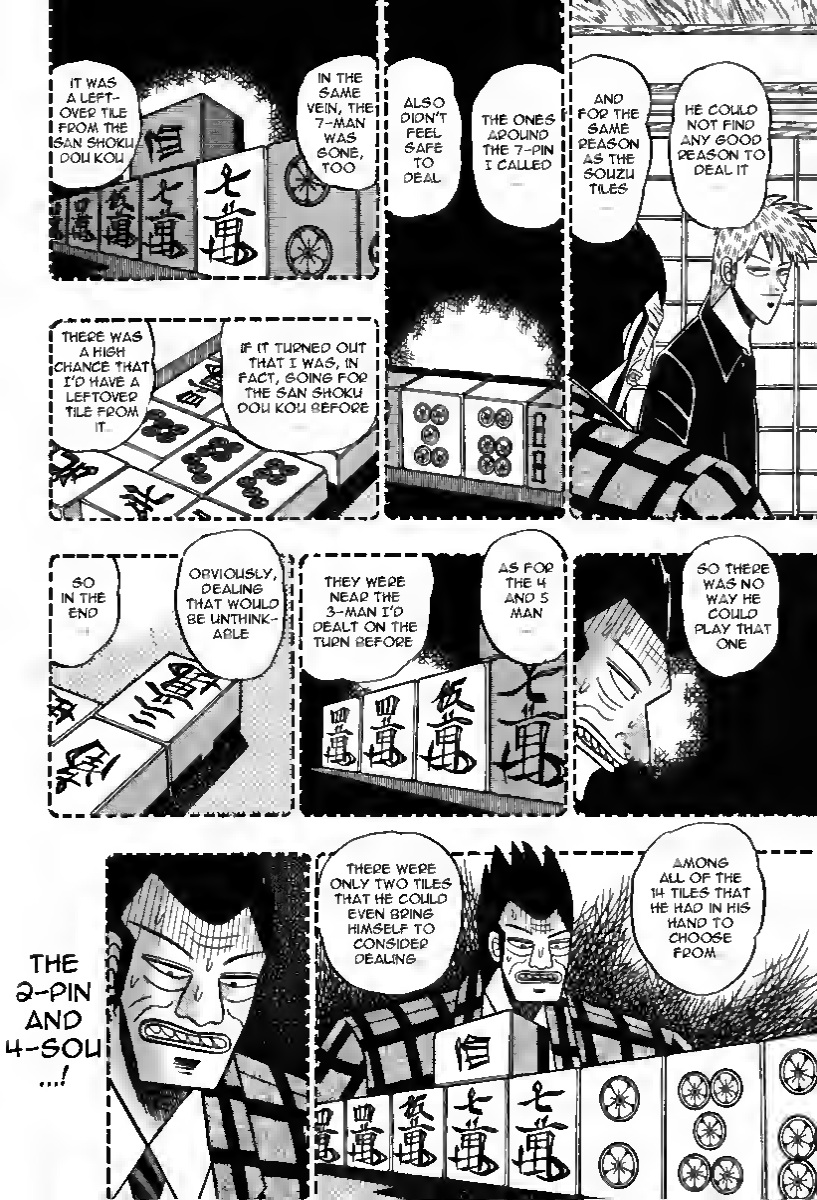

THEY ALL SEEMED EQUALLY RISKY TO HIM!

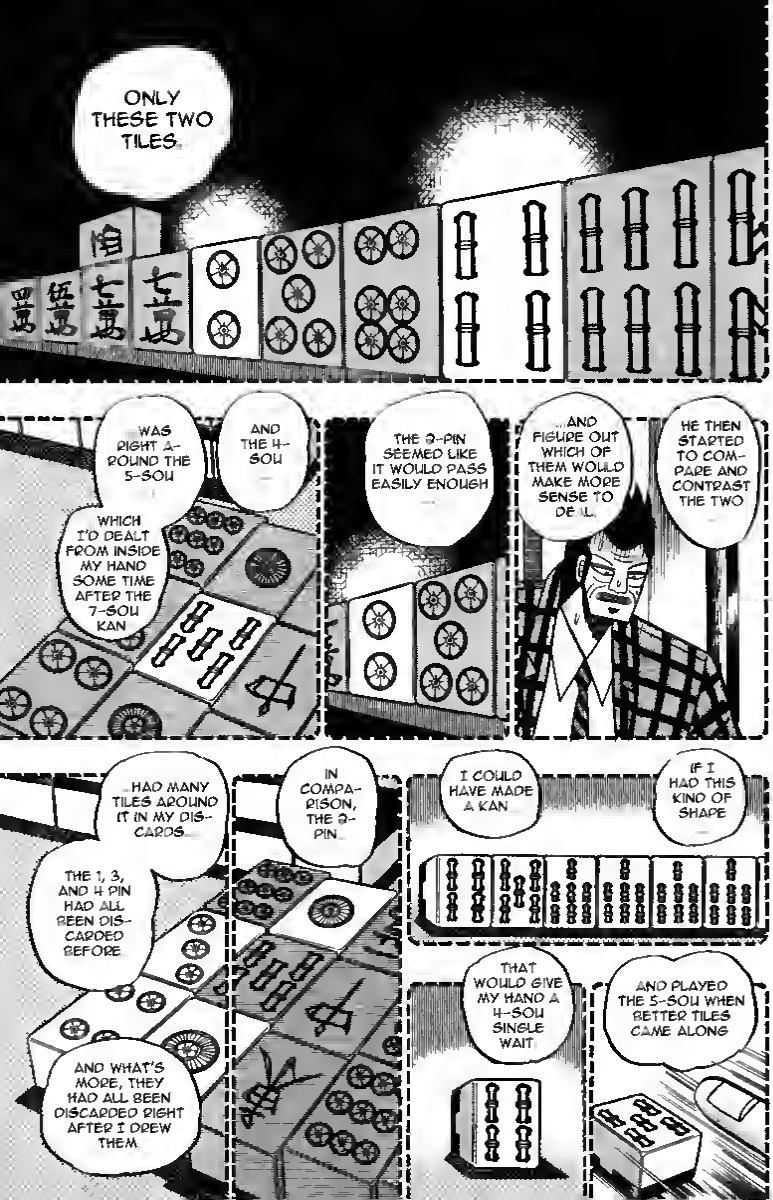

WITH THAT IN MIND
BECAUSE IT WAS AN UNNEEDED TILE FOR THE TANYAO HAND I HAD INITIALLY MADE MYSELF OUT TO BE BUILDING.
HE HAD KEPT IT IN HIS HAND ALONG WITH THE TERMINALS
BUT HE COULDN'T DEAL THAT ONE, EITHER
HIS NEXT CONSIDERATION WAS THE HATSU


THE REASON BEING THAT IT WAS MY WALL THAT HE HAD DRAWN IT FROM
HE COULD NOT DEAL THE XIA THAT HE JUST DREW.
FIRSTLY
ACCORDING TO WHAT HE THOUGHT
HMM-HM


BUT PERHAPS
NORMALLY, A PERSON WOULD NOT HAVE ANY TILES AROUND THAT AREA
THAT WOULD BE THE REASON I WOULD KEEP ONE FOR MY SINGLE WAIT
THEY WERE CLOSE TO THE KAN OF 7-SOU I MADE
THE 6, 8, AND 9 SOU WERE OUT, AS WELL.
SO HE COULDN'T DEAL IT, EITHER.
HE WOULD THINK THAT I WOULD WANT TO WAIT I COULD USE IT WITHOUT TANYAO...


IT WAS JUST A SUSPICION HE HAD
BUT BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENED LAST HAND...
...HE COULD NOT DEAL THAT XIA.
THAT I KNEW WHAT THAT DRAW
HE SUSPECTED
WAS BECAUSE I HAD MADE A PON ON HE DISCARDED.
AND THE ONLY REASON HE WAS DRAWING THAT PARTICULAR TILE...
AND BECAUSE I DID, HE DREW THE XIA THAT PLAGUED HIM SO.

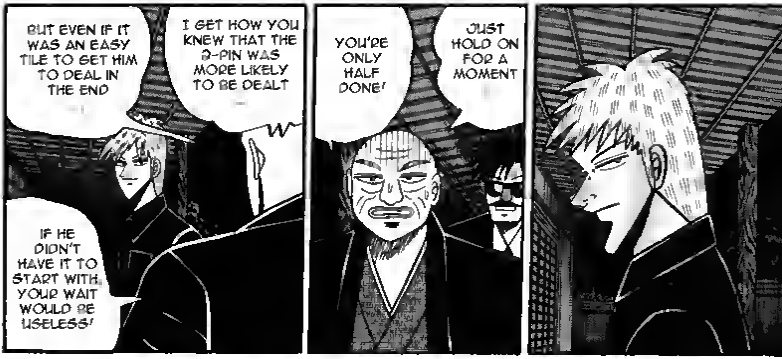

IT WAS A LEFT-OVER TILE FROM THE SAN SHOKU DOU KOU
IN THE SAME VEIN, THE 7-MAN WAS GONE, TOO
ALSO DIDN'T FEEL SAFE TO DEAL
THE ONES AROUND THE 7-PIN I CALLED
AND FOR THE SAME REASON AS THE SOUZU TILES
HE COULD NOT FIND ANY GOOD REASON TO DEAL IT
THERE WAS A HIGH CHANCE THAT I'D HAVE A LEFTOVER TILE FROM IT
IF IT TURNED OUT THAT I WAS, IN FACT, GOING FOR THE SAN SHOKU DOU KOU BEFORE
SO IN THE END
OBVIOUSLY, DEALING THAT WOULD BE UNTHINK-ABLE
THEY WERE NEAR THE 3-MAN I'D DEALT ON THE TURN BEFORE
AS FOR THE 4 AND 5 MAN
SO THERE WAS NO WAY HE COULD PLAY THAT ONE
THE 2-PIN AND 4-SOU ...!
THERE WERE ONLY TWO TILES THAT HE COULD EVEN BRING HIMSELF TO CONSIDER DEALING
AMONG ALL OF THE 14 TILES THAT HE HAD IN HIS HAND TO CHOOSE FROM

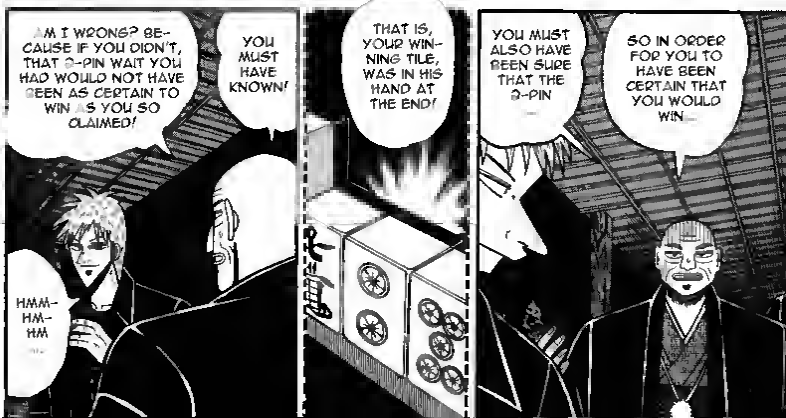

ONLY THESE TWO TILES
...WAS RIGHT AROUND THE 5-SOU
AND THE 4-SOU
WHICH I'D DEALT FROM INSIDE MY HAND SOME TIME AFTER THE 7-SOU KAN
THE 2-PIN SEEMED LIKE IT WOULD PASS EASILY ENOUGH
...AND FIGURE OUT WHICH OF THEM WOULD MAKE MORE SENSE TO DEAL.
HE THEN STARTED TO COMPARE AND CONTRAST THE TWO
...HAD MANY TILES AROUND IT IN MY DISCARDS
IN COMPARISON, THE 2-PIN
THE 1, 3, AND 4 PIN HAD ALL BEEN DISCARDED BEFORE
AND WHAT'S MORE, THEY HAD ALL BEEN DISCARDED RIGHT AFTER I DREW THEM
I COULD HAVE MADE A KAN
IF I HAD THIS KIND OF SHAPE
THAT WOULD GIVE MY HAND A 4-SOU SINGLE WAIT
AND PLAYED THE 5-SOU WHEN BETTER TILES CAME ALONG

HE COULD NOT SEE ANY WAY THAT I WOULD STILL HAVE IT FOR MY SINGLE WAIT.
IT WOULD PASS!
IT HAD TO PASS!
NO THIN-KING THINGS LIKE THAT,
HE DEALT IT!
HMM-HM-HM ...
YOU SEE ...
FOR THE PREDATOR WHO LAYS HIS TRAP ...
THE REASONS I JUST MEN-TIONED FOR THE 2-PIN BEING SAFE ...
EVERY-THING THAT HE WAS THIN-KING AT THE TIME ...
JUST BY U-SING THE 2-PIN AS MY WAIT ...

HMM-HM...
CAN BE PART OF THE TRAP, IN THEM-SELVES
DON'T YOU, KUMICHOU?
I THINK IT WAS A FINE CHOICE FOR MY SINGLE WAIT...
WHA-?!
'KAY, OSAMU. LET'S HIT THE ROAD.
HMM.....
NO POINT IN STICKING AROUND HERE.
AKAGI-SAN...!

WAIT!


BUT EVEN IF IT WAS AN EASY TILE TO GET HIM TO DEAL IN THE END
I GET HOW YOU KNEW THAT THE 2-PIN WAS MORE LIKELY TO BE DEALT
IF HE DIDN'T HAVE IT TO START WITH, YOUR WAIT WOULD BE USELESS!
YOU'RE ONLY HALF DONE!
JUST HOLD ON FOR A MOMENT


AM I WRONG? BECAUSE IF YOU DIDN'T, THAT 2-PIN WAIT YOU HAD WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN AS CERTAIN TO WIN AS YOU SO CLAIMED!
YOU MUST HAVE KNOWN!
HMM-HM-HM
THAT IS, YOUR WINNING TILE, WAS IN HIS HAND AT THE END!
YOU MUST ALSO HAVE BEEN SURE THAT THE 2-PIN
SO IN ORDER FOR YOU TO HAVE BEEN CERTAIN THAT YOU WOULD WIN

I DEMAND AN EXPLAINATION
I'M SURE YOU CAN FIGURE IT OUT ALL BY YOURSELF.
THEN THERE'S NOTHING TO TELL.
IF YOU UNDERSTAND HOW I KNEW THAT MUCH, KUMICHOU
IN SHORT
I SENSED SOMETHING FROM THE 2-PIN HE DISCARDED FROM INSIDE HIS HAND
ON URABE'S 6TH TURN
I GOT THAT 2-PIN ON THE 7TH TURN OF THE MATCH.
JUST BEFORE THAT
URA'E WAS STILL ON THE OFFENSIVE
UP UNTIL HE DEALT THE 2-PIN ON THE 6TH TURN
YEAH.
YOU SENSED SOMETHING?
HE STILL HAD THAT KIND OF MINDSET

URAPE'S HAND PROBABLY LOOKED SOMETHING LIKE THIS
BACK THEN
THE VERY RISKY CHUN!
BUT IMMEDIATELY AFTER THAT, HIS NEXT DRAW TURNED OUT TO BE
HE WAS IN TENPAI
AND IN ORDER TO DO SO, HE CHOSE TO DEAL
HE AVOIDED ME
HE DIDN'T GIVE UP ON WINNING, JUST YET
BUT EVEN SO,
HE KNEW THAT HE COULDN'T DEAL THAT CHUN
AFTER TAKING ONE LOOK AT MY DORA 4 CALL,
I SAW HIM DO JUST THAT MANY TIMES BEFORE OUR BATTLE.
...TO PICK APART HIS HAND, STARTING WITH HIS PAIR...
HE HAD A TENDENCY
IN TIMES SUCH AS THIS,
...THE 2-PIN, PART OF A PAIR.

IT WAS ENGRAVED DEEP INTO HIS SUB-CONSCIOUS
THAT TENDENCY WASN'T SOMETHING THAT HE COULD JUST WILL AWAY
IN OTHER WORDS
AND JUST AS OFTEN AGAINST MINE
HE DID IT WHEN HE WAS UP AGAINST OSAMU'S RIICHI...
A FATAL TILE THAT HE FORGOT TO TAKE CARE OF
HE HAD THAT 3-PIN LEFT OVER FROM THE DECISION HE MADE ON THE 6TH TURN
DURING HIS VERY LAST TURN TO CHOOSE A TILE TO PLAY AGAINST ME
URGH...
...
HUH?
heh-heh-heh...
...?
.....
ぎゅ ぎゅ..

It was a tall price to pay
khehheh-heh
KYAAAH!!

you sensed that one little thing about me...
and because of it...
i just got saddled with a 32 million yen debt...
and with it...
i got this mess...
WAAUGH
.....
A... AKAGI-SAN...
LET'S JUST GET GOING...
THIS GUY... THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO FOR HIM...
AND I DON'T LIKE THIS ATMOSPHERE...
HMM-HM...

AKAGI!
REMEMBER THIS!
WAIT!!!
I DON'T CARE HOW MANY YEARS IT TAKES
BUT MARK MY WORDS AKAGI
DON'T YOU GO THINKIN' OUR BATTLE IS OVER NOW, AKAGI!
I WILL DEFINITELY DEFEAT YOU!!!
AKAGI-SAN...?
.....
HUH?

CHAPTER 51 - PURITY
第51話 純度

I WILL DEFEAT YOU, AKAGI!!!
YOU'D BETTER BELIEVE IT!
SOME DAY...

AKAGI-SAN!

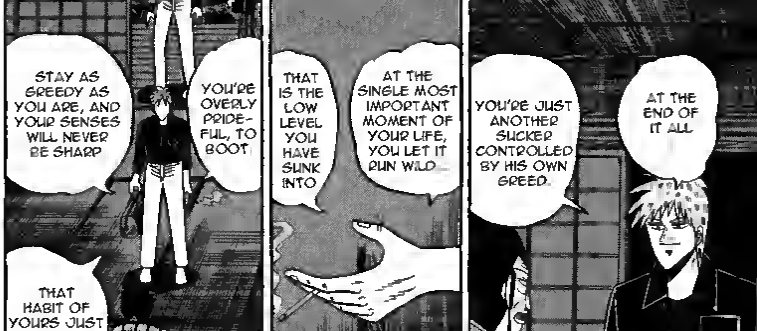
Akagi...

HM-HMM
THERE'S NO TELLING IF IT'S TRUE OR NOT...!
HE'S JUST SAYING THAT STUFF OUT OF DESPAR-ATION...

HUH?
HE'S NOT THE TYPE OF PERSON WHO'D SAY THAT OUT OF DESPAR-ATION...
DESPAR-ATION?

LET'S JUST LEAVE HIM ALONE!
AKAGI-SAN...

IT CAN NEVER COME TRUE.
THAT, SOME DAY, YOU WILL BRING ME DOWN TO YOUR LEVEL...
NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES YOU SHOUT IT AT ME...
URABE ...


AT THE END OF IT ALL
YOU'RE JUST ANOTHER SUCKER CONTROLLED BY HIS OWN GREED.
AT THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT MOMENT OF YOUR LIFE, YOU LET IT RUN WILD...
THAT IS THE LOW LEVEL YOU HAVE SUNK INTO.
YOU'RE OVERLY PRIDE-FUL, TO BOOT.
STAY AS GREEDY AS YOU ARE, AND YOUR SENSES WILL NEVER BE SHARP.
THAT HABIT OF YOURS JUST MAKES YOU DENSE.

I CAN SMELL WHAT YOU'RE PLANNING FROM A MILE AWAY...
You Bastard
I'LL FUCKING KILL YOU SONNOVVA BITCH!
I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU TRY.

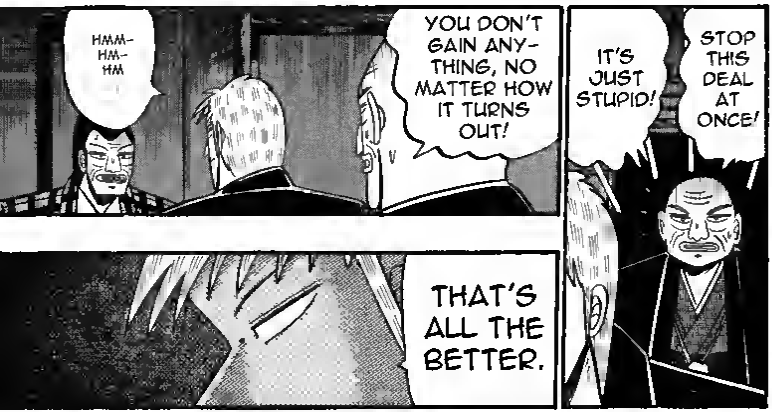
DON'T JUST TALK ABOUT THINGS SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE... STOP SAYING THINGS LIKE "SOME DAY"
I'M RIGHT HERE WHAT'S WRONG WITH "RIGHT NOW"?
IF YOU'RE BEING SIN-CERE, WE CAN PLAY ANOTHER HANCHAN NOW...
IF YOU BEAT ME, I'LL SHOULDER ALL OF YOUR DEBT AND YOU CAN WALK AWAY WITH SOME MANGLED-UP HANDS.
ON THE OTHER HAND IF I'M THE ONE WHO BEATS YOU...

I'LL HAVE YOU CHOP OFF BOTH OF YOUR HANDS, AND YOU'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO PLAY MAHJONG AGAIN.
DOESN'T THAT SEEM LIKE A REA-SONABLE DEAL FOR YOU?
huh ?

ざわざわ…

urgh
…

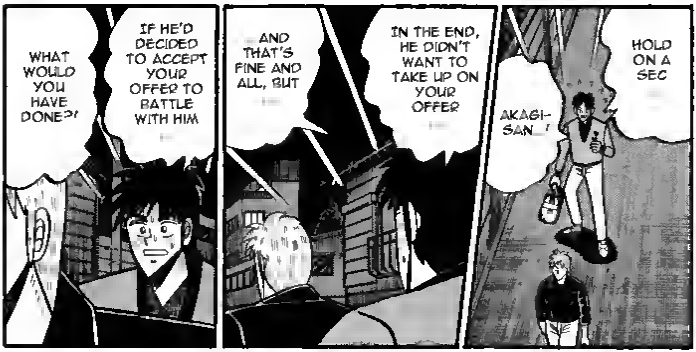
AKAGI!
AKAGI-SAN...?!


HMM-HM-HM
YOU DON'T GAIN ANY-THING, NO MATTER HOW IT TURNS OUT!
IT'S JUST STUPID!
STOP THIS DEAL AT ONCE!
THAT'S ALL THE BETTER.

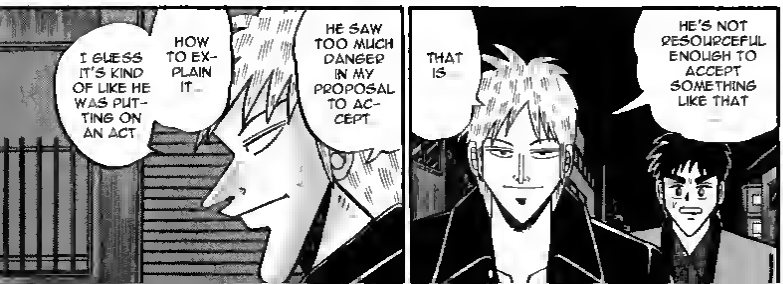
THAT CUTS STRAIGHT TO THE HEART OF WHAT GAM-BLING REALLY MEANS
A LIFE-AND-DEATH BATTLE
TO HAVE A MEAN-INGLESS DEATH
WHOEVER LOSES WILL END UP WITH THEIR LIFE RUINED FOR-EVER... A FATE PERHAPS EVEN WORSE THAN DEATH.
IN THE BATTLE I'M PRO-POSING
THAT'S THE BEST KIND OF BATTLE, DON'T YOU AGREE?
...WHO MAKES BETS BASED ON WHAT I HAVE TO GAIN. I LEAVE THAT TO GUYS LIKE URABE.
I'VE NEVER BEEN THE TYPE

URGH
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, URABE?
THAT'S WHAT WE GAMBLERS CALL TRUE PLEASURE
IT'S CLOSER TO THE TRUTH.
GHHHH HHHHH HHHHH HHHHH
AKAGI-SAN...
.....

SOB
SOB

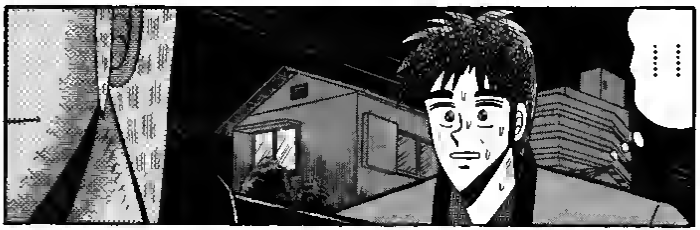

HOLD ON A SEC
AKAGI-SAN!
IN THE END, HE DIDN'T WANT TO TAKE UP ON YOUR OFFER
AND THAT'S FINE AND ALL, BUT
IF HE'D DECIDED TO ACCEPT YOUR OFFER TO BATTLE WITH HIM
WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE?!

I MEAN, IT LOOKED LIKE HE WAS GOING TO
IF HE DID, WOULD YOU REALLY HAVE BET YOUR LIFE ON IT?!
HMM-HM
IT NEVER WOULD HAVE COME TO THAT


HE'S NOT RESOURCEFUL ENOUGH TO ACCEPT SOMETHING LIKE THAT
THAT IS
HE SAW TOO MUCH DANGER IN MY PROPOSAL TO AC-CEPT
HOW TO EX-PLAIN IT
I GUESS IT'S KIND OF LIKE HE WAS PUT-TING ON AN ACT

LIKE HE WAS PUTTING ON A PLAY OR SOMETHING
.....
THEN AGAIN...
BUT ANY WAY YOU LOOK AT IT...
THAT THREAT WAS TOTALLY FAKE
HE DIDN'T EXACTLY KNOW
THAT HE WAS PUTTING ON A PERFORMANCE, HIMSELF
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT...
THAT IS TO SAY...
HE WAS JUST TRYING TO FOOL HIMSELF.
NOT ONE WORD OF WHAT HE SAID WAS REAL.
ALL I DID WAS SHOW THAT TO HIM...
HE HAD A CHANCE TO GET BACK AT ME, BUT HE LET IT ALL GO...
HUH.....
HERE'S WHAT I'M GETTING AT...
THAT'S HOW LOW OF A LEVEL HE FOUND HIMSELF AT...
HE'S STILL AT THE LEVEL WHERE HE HAD TO TAKE THE PROS AND CONS OF THAT AGREEMENT INTO ACCOUNT.
EVEN WHILE HE WAS ANGRY

UP UNTIL THE DAY THAT HE DIES, THAT MAN...
WILL NEVER KNOW WHAT ANGER TRULY FEELS LIKE
AND IN THE SAME VEIN, HE WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND WHAT A REAL BATTLE IS, EITHER
IN SHORT...
THAT MAN WILL ALWAYS PUT STAYING ALIVE BEFORE LIVING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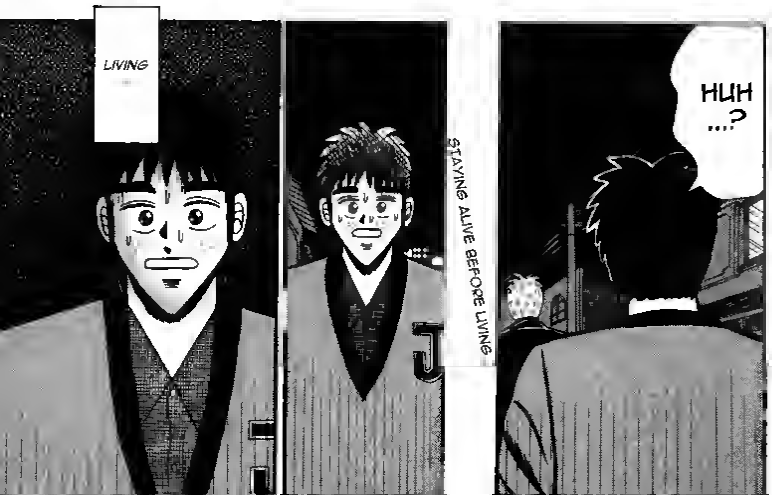
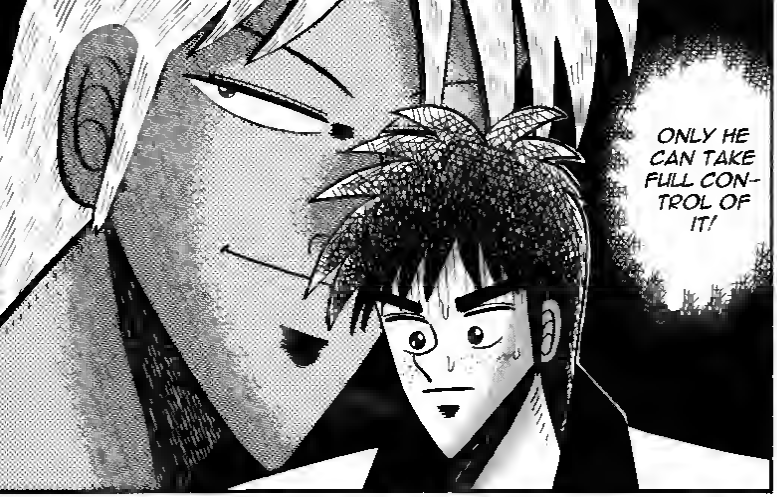

HUH ...?
STAYING ALIVE BEFORE LIVING
LIVING

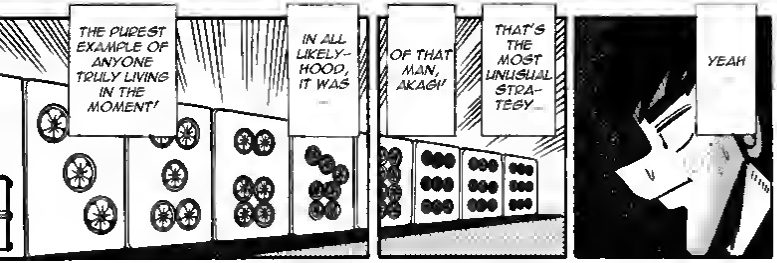
麻雀荘
平和
誠志堂
KEN

IT'S BEEN A WEEK SINCE THEN
ざわ
ざわ

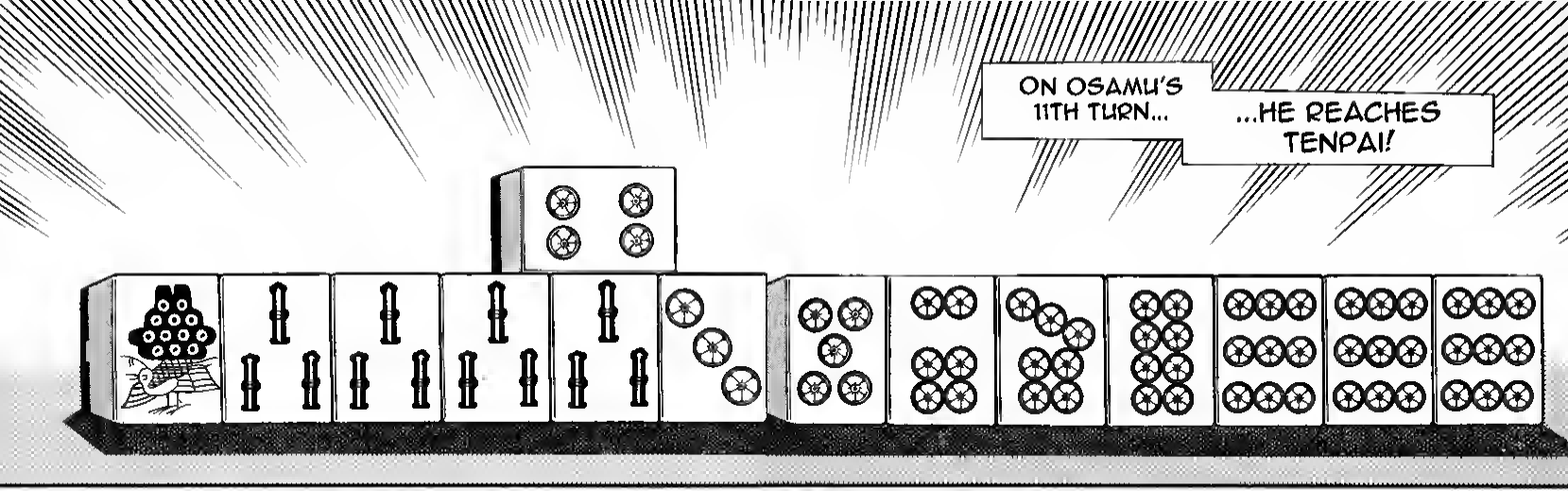
I'M HERE, AT THIS MAHJONG PARLOR.
BUT, FOR SOME REA-SON ...
GOOD
THAT CALM, RESERVED SPEECH OF HIS ...
SOMETHING THAT'S BEEN RUNNING THROUGH MY MIND EVER SINCE...
YOU SEE, BACK THEN, AKAGI-SAN SAID SOMETHING ...
IT WASN'T JUST WORDS OF ADVICE AIMED TOWARDS URABE...
I'VE BEEN THIN-KING ABOUT IT A BIT MORE
BUT, SEE ...
...HE CON-FRONTED URABE WITH SOME WORDS OF ADVICE...
BACK THEN, ON THE NIGHT AFTER HIS HUGE MAHJONG BATTLE...

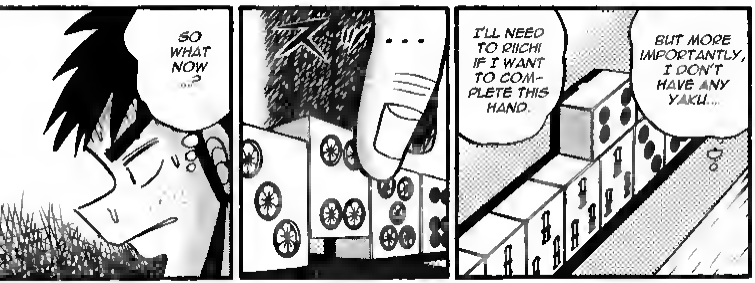
GETTING WHATEVER HAND COMES YOUR WAY AT THE TIME...
JUST STANDING STILL, WITHOUT FIGHTING OR RETREATING...
THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT IT
IT WAS ALSO FOR THE REST OF US WHO WERE THERE...
Ooo
JUST FOCUSING ON SURVIVING FOR THE MOMENT
DELAYING A RESPONSE UNTIL LATER
AKASI-SAN IS UNIQUE... HE'S TOTALLY DIFFERENT!
WHEN IT COMES TO THINGS LIKE THAT...
ONLY AKASI-SAN CAN REALLY LIVE IN THE MOMENT
Ooo


ONLY HE CAN TAKE FULL CONTROL OF IT!

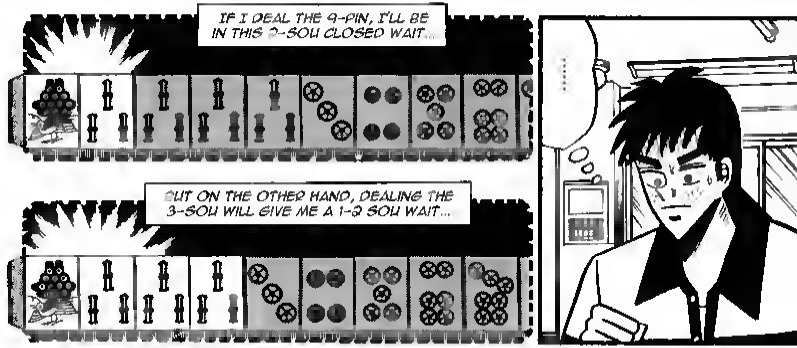

THE PUREST EXAMPLE OF ANYONE TRULY LIVING IN THE MOMENT!
IN ALL LIKELYHOOD, IT WAS...
OF THAT MAN, AKAGI!
THAT'S THE MOST UNUSUAL STRATEGY...
YEAH

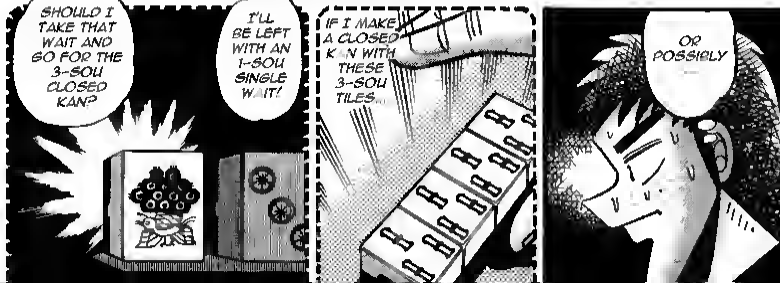
THAT MOST PURE EXAMPLE OF HIS...
IS SOMETHING THAT PEOPLE LIKE ME CAN NEVER DREAM OF MIMICKING
NO MATTER HOW MUCH I WANT TO, I'LL NEVER GET TO THAT LEVEL
ガッ!!

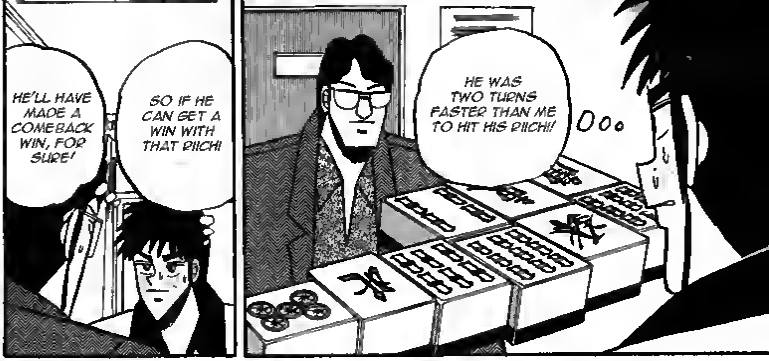

ON OSAMU'S 11TH TURN...
...HE REACHES TENPAI!

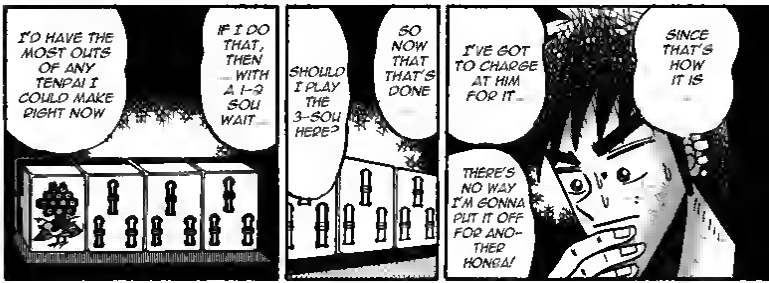

SO WHAT NOW...?
...
I'LL NEED TO RIICHI IF I WANT TO COMPLETE THIS HAND.
BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, I DON'T HAVE ANY YAKU...

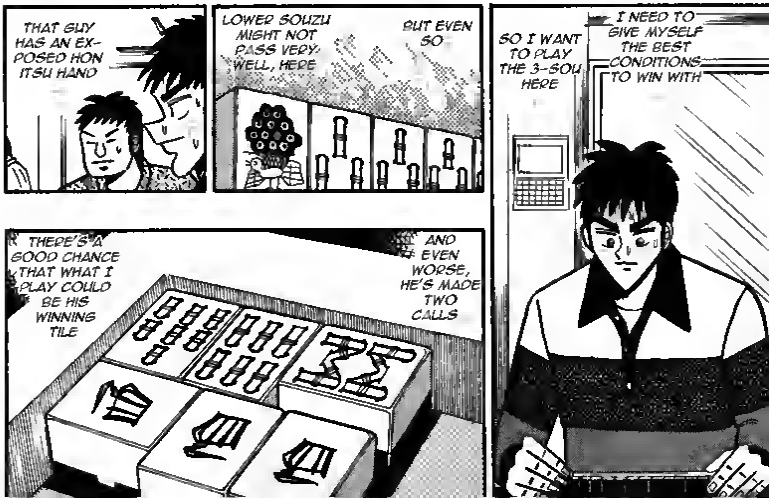
AND TO TOP IT OFF...
THERE'S ONLY 8000 POINTS IN DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIM AND ME...
ALTHOUGH...
IT'S THE LAST ROUND, AND I'M IN THE LEAD...


IF I DEAL THE 9-PIN, I'LL BE IN THIS 2-SOU CLOSED WAIT...
BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, DEALING THE 3-SOU WILL GIVE ME A 1-2 SOU WAIT...
.....

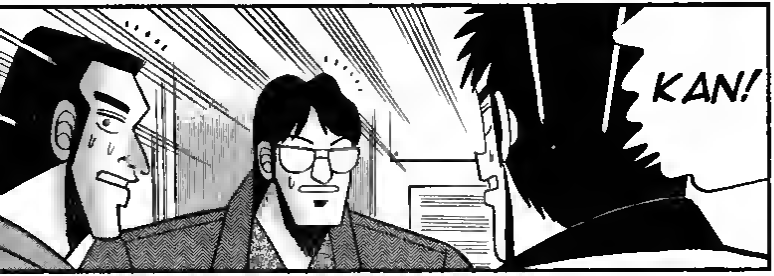

SHOULD I TAKE THAT WAIT AND GO FOR THE 3-SOU CLOSED KAN?
I'LL BE LEFT WITH AN 1-SOU SINGLE WAIT!
IF I MAKE A CLOSED KAN WITH THESE 3-SOU TILES...
OR POSSIBLY...

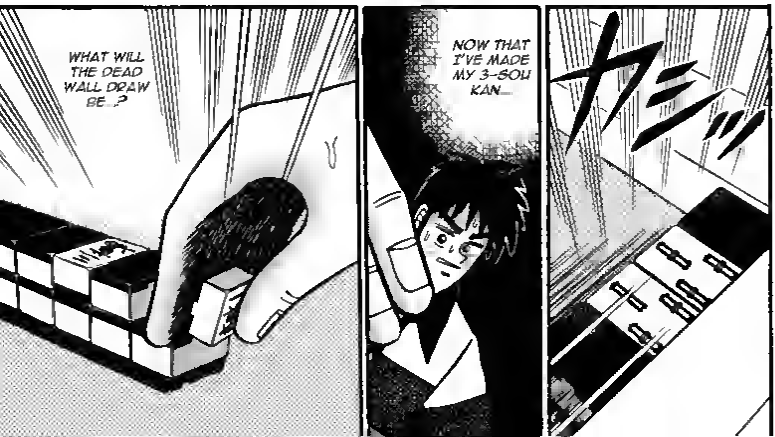

HE'LL HAVE MADE A COMEBACK WIN, FOR SURE!
SO IF HE CAN GET A WIN WITH THAT RIICHI
HE WAS TWO TURNS FASTER THAN ME TO HIT HIS RIICHI!
Ooo

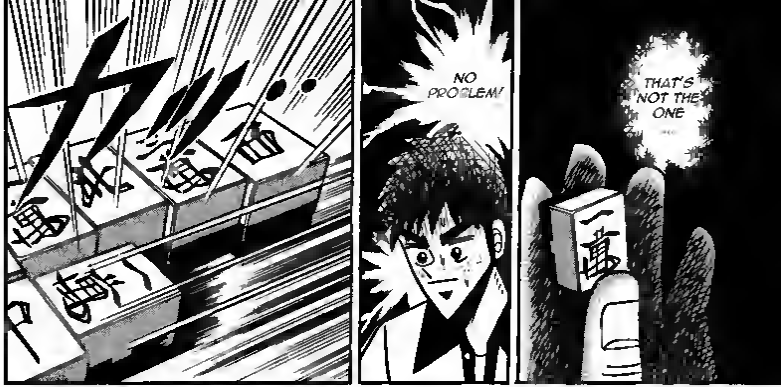

I'D HAVE THE MOST OUTS OF ANY TENPAI I COULD MAKE RIGHT NOW
IF I DO THAT, THEN WITH A 1-2 SOU WAIT...
SHOULD I PLAY THE 3-SOU HERE?
SO NOW THAT THAT'S DONE
I'VE GOT TO CHARGE AT HIM FOR IT...
THERE'S NO WAY I'M GONNA PUT IT OFF FOR ANOTHER HONBA!
SINCE THAT'S HOW IT IS...

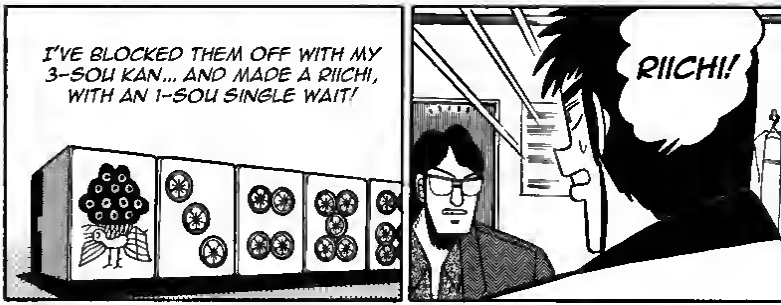

THAT GUY HAS AN EXPOSED HON ITSU HAND
LOWER SOUZU MIGHT NOT PASS VERY WELL, HERE
BUT EVEN SO
SO I WANT TO PLAY THE 3-SOU HERE
I NEED TO GIVE MYSELF THE BEST CONDITIONS TO WIN WITH
THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE THAT WHAT I PLAY COULD BE HIS WINNING TILE
AND EVEN WORSE, HE'S MADE TWO CALLS

I GUESS THIS IS THE BEST OPTION...
IN THAT CASE...


KAN!


WHAT WILL THE DEAD WALL DRAW BE...?
NOW THAT I'VE MADE MY 3-SOU KAN...


NO PROBLEM!
THAT'S NOT THE ONE


I'VE BLOCKED THEM OFF WITH MY 3-SOU KAN... AND MADE A RIICHI, WITH AN 1-SOU SINGLE WAIT!
RIICHI!

IT WAS A KIND OF TRAP MEANT TO ENSNARE HIS OPPONENTS, BUT
OSAMU'S ATTEMPT AT A SNEAK ATTACK
THIS 1-SOU WAIT COULD BE SAID TO BE

HIS TRAP WAS DISMANTLED IN ONLY A COUPLE TURNS!
MANAGED TO GET A TSUMO WIN
A MERE TWO TURNS LATER, THE PLAYER SEATED ACROSS FROM HIM
IN THE END
IT WAS NOT MEANT TO BE
HUHHHHHHHH...
IT DIDN'T WORK OUT, IN THE END
BUT THAT WAIT DEFINITELY WASN'T A BAD IDEA
THAT 1-SOU...
EVEN STILL, THOUGH
NO MATTER HOW GOOD OF A WAIT IT WAS...
I CAN'T SAY I'M EXACTLY PLEASED WITH THE RESULTS

THE OTHER TWO 1-SOUS WERE PROBABLY ALREADY USED UP IN HIS HAND FOR HIS PAIR OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT...
SO, BASED ON THAT...
THERE WAS AN 1-SOU IN THE DISCARDS OF THE PLAYER TO MY RIGHT...
SOME KIND OF SHAPE WHERE THOSE TWO 1-SOU TILES WOULD NEVER LEAVE HIS HAND...
NIISAN
...
.....
GUESS YOU LET YOUR MIND OFFA THE GAME FOR A MINUTE, YEAH?
YOU REALLY BLEW YOUR COVER WITH THAT KAN YOU MADE OF THE 7-SOU
...
YOU'RE A PRETTY BAD PLAYER, AIN'T'CHA?
I'VE BEEN WATCHIN' YOU...

THAT AKAGI GUY.
DOES YOUR BOSS PLAY LIKE THAT, TOO?
TELL ME SOMETHIN'
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?!
WHA
HNN-HN-HN
OH, I JUST HEARD THIS LI'L RUMOR THAT'S BEEN GOIN' AROUND
HNN-HN-HN
H
HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT AKAGI?!
WHADDAYA SAY YOU INTRODUCE ME TO YOUR BOSS, HUH?
SO, NIISAN
IT DID GET ME A LITTLE BIT IN-TERESTED
I GOTTA SAY
RUMOR HAS IT YOUR BUDDY BEAT UP ONE OF FUJISAWA'S GROUP BLACK 'N' BLUE
THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN HEARIN'
TELL ME IF I'M WRONG ON THIS, BUT

LEMME MEET THIS AKAGI FRIEND OF YOURS.
.....
WH-
WHAT ARE YOU, STUPID ?!
WHY THE HECK WOULD I WANT TO DO THAT?!
AND BEFORE WE EVEN GET TO THAT
WHO THE HECK ARE YOU, ANYWAY?!
AT LEAST TELL YOUR NAME TO SOMEONE BEFORE YOU ASK THEM A FA-
NAKAI JUNPEI.
ASK ANYONE AROUND THESE PARTS, AND THEY'LL KNOW THAT NAME
I'M ONE OF THE BEST MAHJONG PLAYERS AROUND
.....
MAHJONG ...?

CHAPTER 52 - CALLING
第52話　生業

ざわ…
……
HNN-HN-HN……
WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH ANY-THING…?
WHAT'S THIS ABOUT MAHJONG ALL OF A SUDDEN?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN…?
I MAKE MY LIVING WINNIN' MAHJONG GAMES……
BEATIN' PEOPLE WHO'VE GOT MONEY TO BURN.
LITTLE BY LITTLE……
BASICALLY, I PLAY MAHJONG WITH WHO-EVER'S HERE AT THE TIME……
I DON'T THINK WE NEED TO GO INTO DEPTH ABOUT THAT OR NOTHIN'…
SO?
BUT I SAY IT'S MY CALLING IN LIFE
SOME PEOPLE MIGHT CALL IT A HOBBY'A MINE…

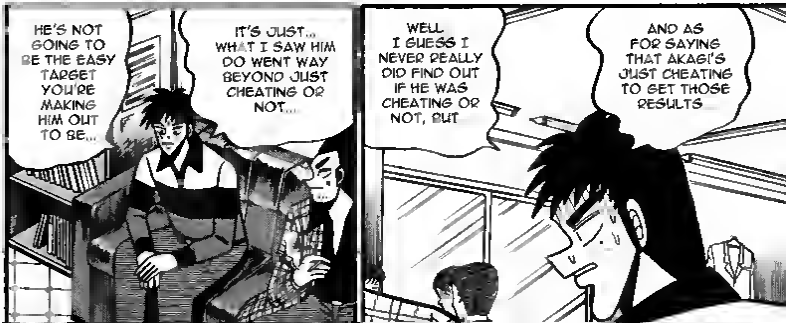
YOU WERE ASKING IF YOU COULD MEET UP WITH AKAGI-SAN WHAT GOOD WOULD THAT BE?
HNN-HN-HN
THERE'D BE A LOT OF GOOD BEIN' DONE, ANSAN...
SO MUCH THAT I'VE ALREADY MADE UP MY MIND ABOUT IT
I'VE GOT TO CHALLENGE HIM TO A MAHJONG BATTLE!

T/N: "ANSAN" IS A VERY FAMILIAR WAY OF SAYING "ANATA", OR "YOU" IN THE KANSAI DIALECT. IT HAS A SIMILAR EFFECT TO "BUDDY" OR "PAL".

IF THE RUMORS ARE TRUE ABOUT THIS AKAGI SHMUCK...
HE'S USIN' SOME KINDA SLEIGHT OF HAND TRICK THAT NOBODY NOTICES, AND MAKIN' IT LOOK LIKE A REALLY FLASHY GAME O' MAHJONG
THAT SOUNDS LIKE IT'D BE REAL FUN TO PLAY AGAINST

I'LL BEAT 'IM IN THE END, FOR SURE!

YOU WANT TO FACE AKAGI-SAN...?
I CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT I'M HEARING
OHHH?
MAN, YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW FAR OFF YOU ARE
HUHHHH
...


HE'S NOT GOING TO BE THE EASY TARGET YOU'RE MAKING HIM OUT TO BE...
IT'S JUST... WHAT I SAW HIM DO WENT WAY BEYOND JUST CHEATING OR NOT...
WELL I GUESS I NEVER REALLY DID FIND OUT IF HE WAS CHEATING OR NOT, BUT
AND AS FOR SAYING THAT AKAGI'S JUST CHEATING TO GET THOSE RESULTS

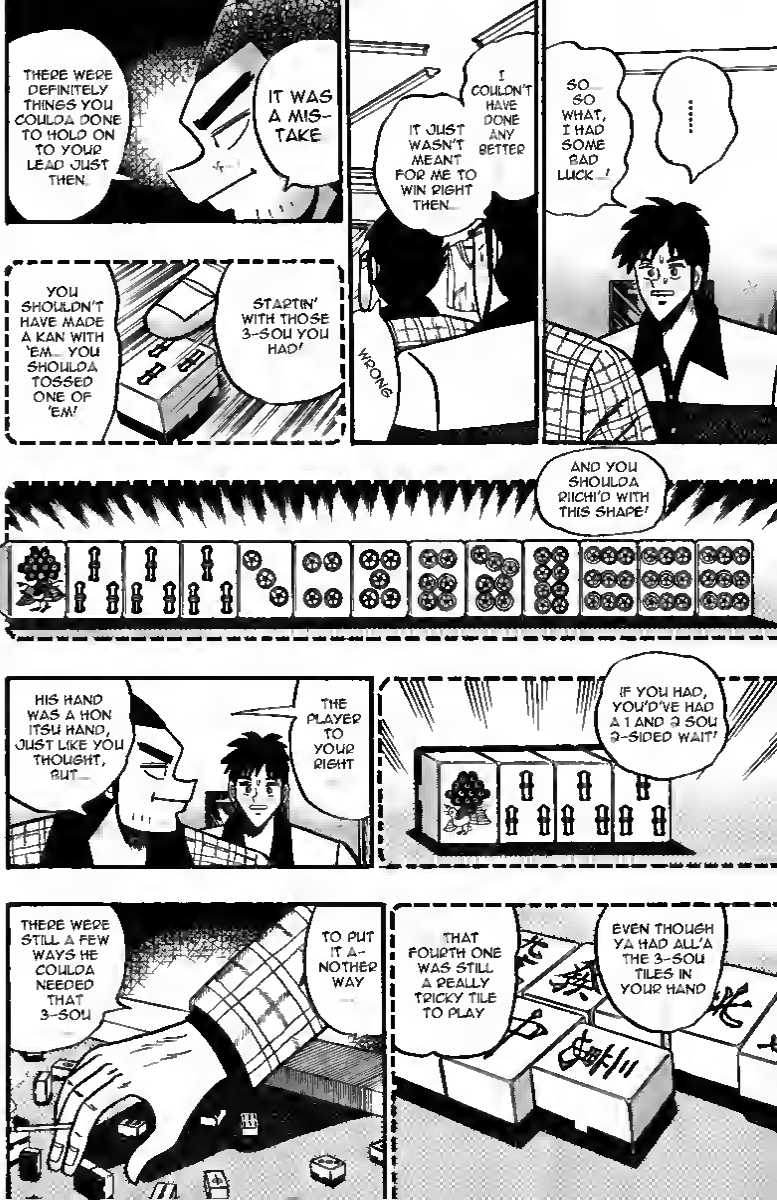
HNN-HN-HN....
YOU DON'T GET IT AT ALL .... JEEZ...
NOT WITH THAT ATTITUDE, FOR SURE!
YOU WON'T BE SO MUCH AS A THREAT TO HIM!

FIRST OF ALL
YOU CAN NEVER SAY HOW IT'LL GO BEFORE YOU EVEN START!
GAMB-LING'S ALL A MATTER OF CHANCE
YOU'RE JUST SAYIN' THAT 'CAUSE YOU'RE ON GOOD TERMS WITH THE GUY, YOU'RE BIASED, IN OTHER WORDS

I CAN'T ?
NOPE
ANSAN, YOUR WHOLE BASIS FOR SAYIN' THAT HE AND I WOULD NEVER MAKE A GOOD MATCH WAS JUST A COMPARISON BETWEEN US IN TERMS OF SKILL!
IF YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO PLAY WELL, YOURSELF, YOU CAN'T EXACTLY BE THE JUDGE OF WHO'LL WIN.
HUH ...?
BUT HOW WOULD A PLAYER AS BAD AS YOU HAVE A CLUE ABOUT THAT?
YOU'RE TALKING HIM UP TO BE SOME KINDA UNBEATABLE PLAYER...

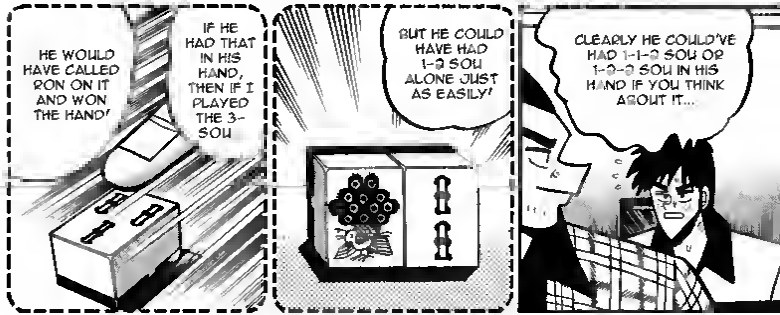
LEMME SHOW YOU SOMETHIN'
ガタッ!
I'LL USE THAT LAST GAME YOU PLAYED
THAT 3-SOU KAN YOU MADE IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF WHAT I JUST SAID
TO SHOW HOW LITTE YOU REALLY KNOW
LEMME JUST SHOW YOU NOW.
YOU'LL FIND OUT EVEN-TUALLY.
HNN-HN-HN
...
...WHY...?
IF HE MADE A WIN, HE'D TAKE THE LEAD BACK FROM YA FOR SURE.
THAT 2ND-PL...CE GUY WAS THE FIRST ONE AT THE TABLE TO GET HIS RICHI DOWN...
THEN, ON YOUR 11TH TURN
...
BUT THE PROBLEM WAS THAT THE GUY IN SECOND WAS CATCHIN' UP TO YOU... HE ONLY HAD 800 POINTS TO GO FOR A COMEBACK.
YOU WERE IN THE LEAD
GOIN' BACK TO THE ROUND I'M TALKIN' 'BOUT, ANSAN, IT WAS THE LAST ROUND OF THE MATCH

YOU WENT INTO TENPAI WITH THIS KINDA SHAPE
YOU MADE A 3-SOU KAN
GOIN' ON FROM THERE
. . .
AND ONCE YOU MADE YOUR DEAD WALL DRAW, YOU GAVE IT A RIICHI, PLAYIN' THE TILE YOU JUST DREW...
GIVIN' YOU A 1-SOU SINGLE WAIT
SO THE 1-SOU COULD LIKELY HAVE BEEN HIS WINNIN' TILE
THE GUY TO YOUR RIGHT HAD BEEN CALLIN' UP HON ITSU TILES THE WHOLE TIME
YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT THAT MUCH
YOU WERE PROLLY THINKIN' OF SOME WAY IT COULD GET PLAYED FOR YOU BUT, ANSAN
WHEN YOU MADE THAT 3-SOU KAN...
THAT'S A REALLY NAIVE WAY TO THINK
YOU LOST THE VERY SMALL LEAD YOU HAD 'FORE THEN...
HE MADE A COME-BACK.
THE GUY IN SECOND PLACE MANAGED TO GET THE TILE HE NEEDED TO COMPLETE HIS RIICHI WITH A TSUMO...
BUT YOUR SO-CALLED TRAP ENDED NOT TOO LONG AFTER THAT...


THERE WERE DEFINITELY THINGS YOU COULDA DONE TO HOLD ON TO YOUR LEAD JUST THEN...
IT WAS A MIS-TAKE
I COULDN'T HAVE DONE ANY BETTER
IT JUST WASN'T MEANT FOR ME TO WIN RIGHT THEN...
WRONG
SO... SO WHAT, I HAD SOME BAD LUCK...!
.....
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE MADE A KAN WITH 'EM... YOU SHOULDA TOSSED ONE OF 'EM!
STARTIN' WITH THOSE 3-SOU YOU HAD!
AND YOU SHOULDA RIICHI'D WITH THIS SHAPE!
HIS HAND WAS A HON ITSU HAND, JUST LIKE YOU THOUGHT, BUT...
THE PLAYER TO YOUR RIGHT
IF YOU HAD, YOU'D'VE HAD A 1 AND 2 SOU 2-SIDED WAIT!
THERE WERE STILL A FEW WAYS HE COULDA NEEDED THAT 3-SOU
TO PUT IT A-NOTHER WAY...
THAT FOURTH ONE WAS STILL A REALLY TRICKY TILE TO PLAY
EVEN THOUGH YA HAD ALL'A THE 3-SOU TILES IN YOUR HAND

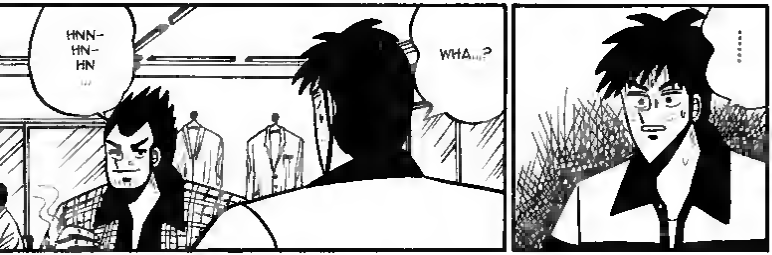
...THE 1-SOU OR 2-SOU WOULDA OVERFLOWED DEPENDIN' ON WHICH OF THOSE SHAPES HIS HAND WAS IN!
BUT THE THING IS, IF HE'D MADE A CHI WITH YOUR 3-SOU
HERE'S ONE OF THE WAYS...
HIM HAVIN' SOUZU IN 'IS WAIT WAS REALLY LIKELY
...AND THIS'S ANOTHER ONE
THE PLAYER TO YOUR RIGHT WOULDA CALLED CHI ON IT...
ASSUMIN' YOU MADE YOUR RIICHI BY PLAYIN' THAT 3-SOU...
AS A MATTER O' FACT, HIS HAND DID HAVE ONE OF THOSE SHAPES...
HE HAD TWO OF THE 1-SOU AND ONE OF THE 2-SOU!
AND Y'SEE, ANSAN, THAT 1-SOU...
AND THEN, HE'D'A PLAYED HIS 1-SOU RIGHT AFTER!
YOU WOULDA STAYED IN FIRST PLACE
...WOULDA COMPLETED YOUR HAND RIGHT THEN AND THERE!

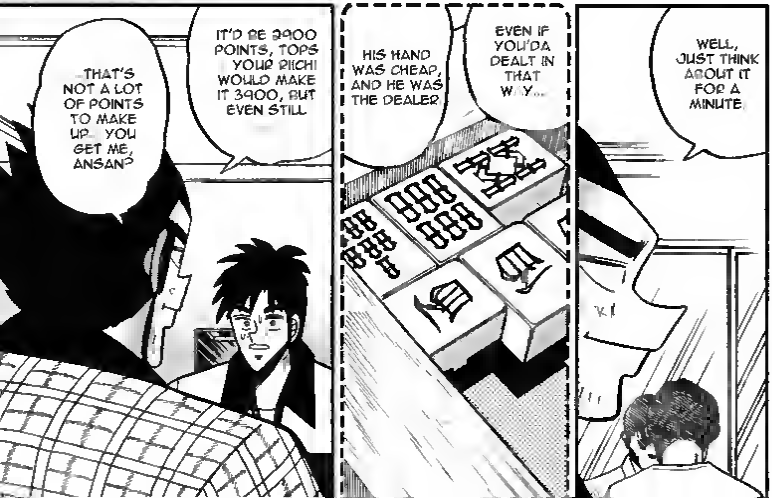
THAT'S SO OBVIOUSLY HINDSIGHT BIAS!
GIVE ME A BREAK!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?! WHO'S THE BIASED ONE HERE?!
WH...


HE WOULD HAVE CALLED RON ON IT AND WON THE HAND!
IF HE HAD THAT IN HIS HAND, THEN IF I PLAYED THE 3-SOU
BUT HE COULD HAVE HAD 1-2 SOU ALONE JUST AS EASILY!
CLEARLY HE COULD'VE HAD 1-1-2 SOU OR 1-2-2 SOU IN HIS HAND IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT...

...HAD SOMETHIN' LIKE A SO-SO SHOT AT BEIN' HIS WINNIN' TILE...
WHAT WITH HIM CALLIN' UP A STORM OVER THERE, THAT 3-SOU
BUT ....
THAT COULD HAPPENED, TOO,
WELL, SURE.
THERE WAS A HUGE RISK OF GIVING HIM HIS WINNING TILE WITH THAT DIS-CARD!
EVEN WORSE, HE'D ALREADY CALLED TWO TIMES ON HON ITSU TILES!
HNN-HN-HN

...WOULDN'T REALLY MATTER IN THE GRAND SCHEME OF THINGS.
WHETHER OR NOT HE ENDED UP RONNIN' ON THAT...


HNN-HN-HN...
WHA...?
.....


...THAT'S NOT A LOT OF POINTS TO MAKE UP... YOU GET ME, ANSAN?
IT'D BE 3900 POINTS, TOPS. YOUR RICHI WOULD MAKE IT 3900, BUT EVEN STILL
HIS HAND WAS CHEAP, AND HE WAS THE DEALER
EVEN IF YOU'DA DEALT IN THAT W_Y...
WELL, JUST THINK ABOUT IT FOR A MINUTE.

THAT 2100-POINT DIFFERENCE FROM FIRST
SINCE YOU WERE ONLY IN THE LEAD BY 800 POINTS TO BEGIN WITH
WOULD-N'T'VE BEEN A HUGE SETBACK
YOU'D ONLY BE A TOTAL OF 2100 POINTS AWAY FROM FIRST
AND SINCE THE GUY WHO WAS IN SECOND BEFORE THAT WOULDA LOST 1000 POINTS FROM HIS RIICHI, TOO
YOU'D ONLY HAVETA GIVE UP THAT 3400 TEMPORARILY
HE'D OBVIOUSLY EXTEND THE GAME FOR ONE MORE.
SINCE YOU WOULDA DEALT INTO THE DEALER'S HAND FOR THE ROUND
YOU'D GET A WHOLE 'NOTHER HONBA TO MAKE IT BACK.
AND ON TOP OF THAT
THEN YOU'D HAVE MADE YOUR COME-BACK.
ALL YOU'D NEED TO DO WOULD BE TO GET YOUR HAND TO 8000 POINTS OR BETTER
IN THAT NEXT HAND
AND WITH THE 100-POINT HONBA STICK ON TOP'A ALL THAT...
IT'D STILL BE SAVE-ABLE, NO DOUBT ABOUT IT.
YOU'D BE GIVEN A CHANCE TO CLIMB BACK UP IN THE FINAL ROUND

YOU SHOULDA BEEN MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THAT RICHI.
MORE THAN THAT, THE REAL PROBLEM YOU HAD IN THAT LAST ROUND WAS THE RICHI THAT THE GUY ACROSS FROM YOU MADE...
YOU COULD EASILY TURN THE SAME BACK AROUND
WHAT I'M SAYIN' IS THAT OE-LIN' IN WOULDN'T BE THE END OF IT ALL
IT'D JUST BE THAT ONE HAND
EVEN IF YOU DEALT INTO THAT CHEAP DEALER HAND OF 'IS
STOPPIN' 'IM FROM WINNIN' CAME FIRST, SO...
YOU'D WANNA SHUT IT DOWN AT ANY COST
IF IT GAVE THE DEALER A WIN, THAT'D BE FINE, TOO
SO IN THE END, YOU'D'VE WANTED TO PLAY THAT 3-SOU
EVEN IF YOU CAN'T GET ON BASE, YOU CAN AT LEAST HELP A TEAM-MATE ADVANCE.
IF IT'S BASE-BALL WE'RE TALKIN' ABOUT, IT'S KINDA LIKE A SACRIFICIAL PLAY...
...AND AFTER THAT, IF YOU KEPT YOUR WITS ABOUT YOU...
DEAL INTO THAT HAND, AND YOU'D SHUT DOWN THE RISK OF THAT RICHI...
EVEN THOUGH A 1-9 SOUZU WAIT SEEMED LIKELY AFTER HE CALLED SO MUCH, IT WOULDN'T HAVE MATTERED MUCH IN THE END
NOT BAD AT ALL, YEAH?
YOU'D HAVE ANO-THER CHANCE TO TURN IT BACK AROUND TO YOUR FAVOR IN THE NEXT ROUND!

YEAH ...
WHICHEVER WAY IT ENDED UP GOIN'...
YOU'D BE IN A GOOD SPOT
RIGHT?
AH.
THIS GUY

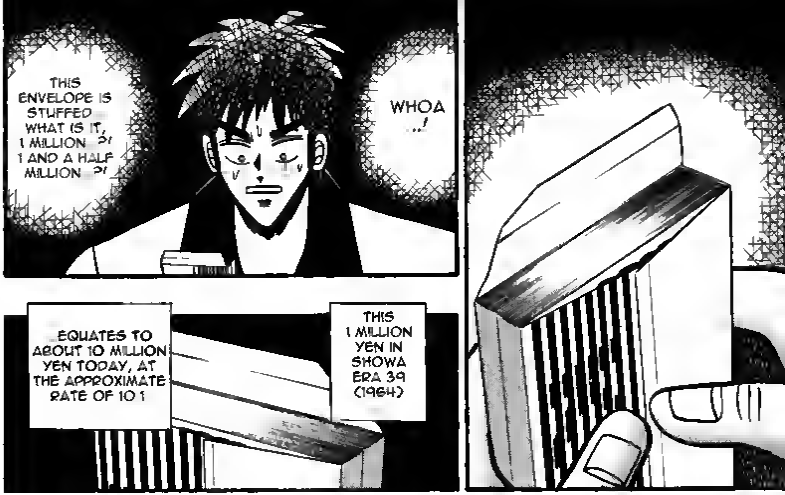
HNN-HN-HN...
IT'S HU-MILIATING TO HAVE MY FLAWS EXPOSED LIKE THIS... BUT I'VE GOT TO ADMIT, HE HAS A POINT...
HE MADE IT SEEM LIKE I WAS, LIKE, ASLEEP OR SOMETHING WHILE I WAS PLAYING...
HE JUST RIPPED THAT MAHJONG GAME I PLAYED TO SHREDS...
LOOKS LIKE I'VE MADE MY POINT.
IT'S A BIT SURPRISING TO ME, BUT
I CAN TAKE A GUESS AT JUST HOW GOOD THIS AKAGI GUY IS THAT YOU'RE TALKIN' SO PROUDLY 'BOUT
SO, BASED OFFA THAT...
IT WAS OBVIOUS TO ME AS I WAS WATCHIN' YOU, BUT YOU DIDN'T EVEN HAVE THAT IDEA CROSS YOUR MIND, ANSAN
THAT'S NOT TRUE!
AND THAT I'D BEAT 'IM UP PRETTY BAD IF WE PLAYED A MATCH TOGETHER
IT'S CLEAR THAT HE AIN'T THE MAHJONG MASTER THAT EVERYONE'S TALKING HIM UP TO BE.

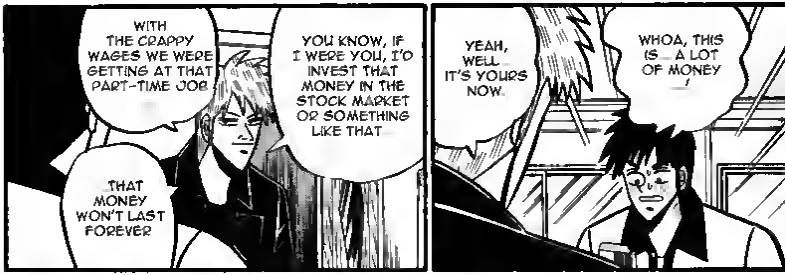
HOW CAN YOU MAKE SUCH HUGE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT HIM WITHOUT EVEN MEETING HIM?!
HNN-HN-HN...
NOW, NOW, DON'T GET ALL WORKED UP...
IF YOU'LL INTRODUCE ME TO THE GUY NICE AND QUIETLY, I'LL MAKE IT WELL WORTH YOUR WHILE, ANSAN...
SO WHADDA YA SAY, HUH?
LEMME MEET THIS AKAGI GUY.
I'M COUNTING ON YOU, MAN!
HERE
WHA-!
IT'S A TIP, O' COURSE!
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?!
AIN'T A BETTER WAY ON THE PLANET TO GET PEOPLE TO DO WHAT YOU WANT THAN TO GREASE THEIR PALMS, AM I RIGHT?
DON'T FUCK WITH ME!
IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW MUCH YOU GIVE ME!!
IT'S USE-LESS!!
I CAN'T INTRO-DUCE YOU TO HIM!

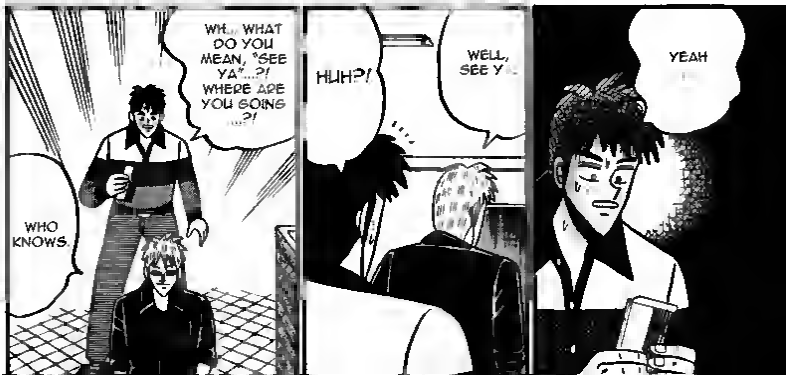
I WON'T TAKE YOUR CASH!
FIRST OF ALL, I DON'T KNOW ANY MORE THAN YOU DO!
HUH...?
I DON'T HAVE ANY IDEA WHERE AKAGI-SAN IS!
ON THAT NIGHT A WEEK AGO WE JUST WENT OUR SEPERATE WAYS
I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM SINCE
IS THAT
IS THAT TRUE?!
YEAH
I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF HE'S IN THIS TOWN ANYMORE
HUHHHHHH?!
.....
MAN, WHAT'S UP WITH THAT
WHAT A FUCKIN' USELESS MOPON

I GUESS I'M OUTTA HERE...
WELL, IF THAT'S HOW IT'S GOTTA BE...
AKAGI-SAN?!
HUH ...?
A...
AKAGI ...?

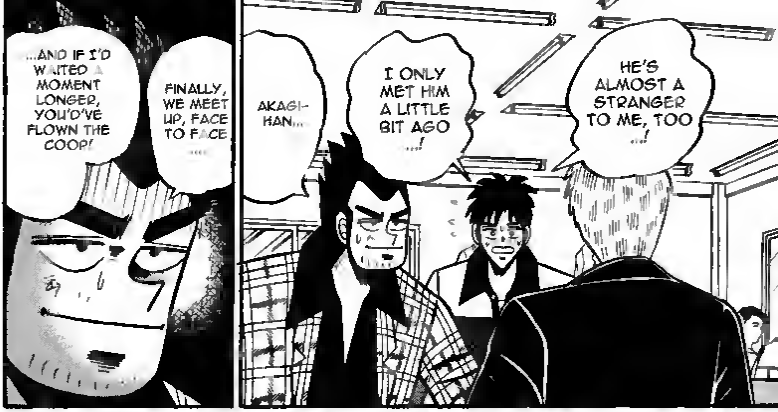
HMM?
SO, WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE, HUH?
OH, I'VE JUST BEEN AROUND HERE AND THERE.
HM-HMM
AH
I WAS STARTING TO GET A LITTLE WORRIED!
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN, ALL THIS TIME?
BUT I'VE GOT A SPECIAL DELIVERY FOR YOU.
NOT ONLY THAT
AH
I JUST CAUGHT SOME HEARSAY THAT YOU'VE BEEN HANGING AROUND HERE A LOT, LATELY.
OH
...YOU GET A LITTLE CUT OF THE PROFIT.
SINCE YOU HELPED OUT KAWADA-KUMICHOU, TOO, THAT NIGHT A WEEK AGO
HUH ...?
TAKE IT.


THIS ENVELOPE IS STUFFED WHAT IS IT, 1 MILLION ...?! 1 AND A HALF MILLION ...?!
WHOA ...!
THIS 1 MILLION YEN IN SHOWA ERA 39 (1964)
EQUATES TO ABOUT 10 MILLION YEN TODAY, AT THE APPROXIMATE RATE OF 10:1

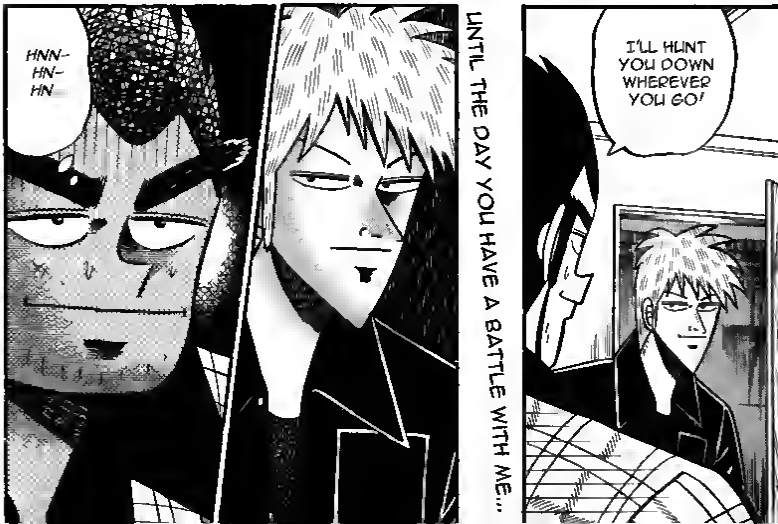

WITH THE CRAPPY WAGES WE WERE GETTING AT THAT PART-TIME JOB
YOU KNOW, IF I WERE YOU, I'D INVEST THAT MONEY IN THE STOCK MARKET OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT
THAT MONEY WON'T LAST FOREVER
YEAH, WELL... IT'S YOURS NOW.
WHOA, THIS IS... A LOT OF MONEY ...!


WH... WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "SEE YA"...?! WHERE ARE YOU GOING ...?!
WHO KNOWS.
HUH?!
WELL, SEE Y...
YEAH

AKAGI-SAN...?!
IF KAWADA OR ISHIKAWA COME BY LOOKING FOR ME, YOU CAN TELL THEM I SAID THAT
AFTER THAT, I DON'T KNOW
I'M GETTING OUT OF THIS TOWN, FOR SURE
NO!
IT'S... WELL...
WHO'S THIS GUY? A FRIEND OF YOURS...?
HEH-HEH-HEH...
.....?


...AND IF I'D WAITED A MOMENT LONGER, YOU'D'VE FLOWN THE COOP!
FINALLY, WE MEET UP, FACE TO FACE.....
AKAGI-HAN...
I ONLY MET HIM A LITTLE BIT AGO...!
HE'S ALMOST A STRANGER TO ME, TOO...!

IF YOU LEAVE NOW,
THERE'S NO WAY I'M LETTIN' THIS CHANCE SLIP BY...


HNN--HN-HN...
UNTIL THE DAY YOU HAVE A BATTLE WITH ME...
I'LL HUNT YOU DOWN WHEREVER YOU GO!

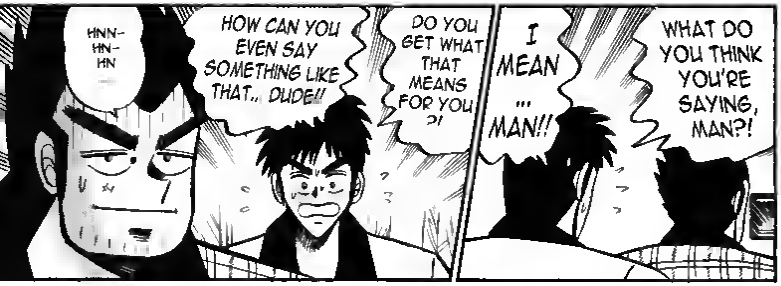
YOU MAY HAVE WAITED A LONG TIME FOR IT, BUT
NIISAN
AT THE MOMENT, I DON'T REALLY FEEL LIKE PLAYING A WHOLE GAME OF MAHJONG, YOU KNOW?
IT'S REALLY TOO BAD...
THAT MIGHT MAKE ME WANT TO PLAY
HEY, WHY DON'T YOU BET THAT ARM YOU'RE GRABBING ME WITH, HMM?

I'LL BET ONE O' MY ARMS ON THE MATCH
I'LL GO FOR WHAT YOU'RE SUGGESTIN'.
THAT SOUNDS LIKE IT AUGHTA BE FUN
AKAGI-HAN...
YEAH, RIGHT SEE YA.

CHAPTER 53 – AT HAND

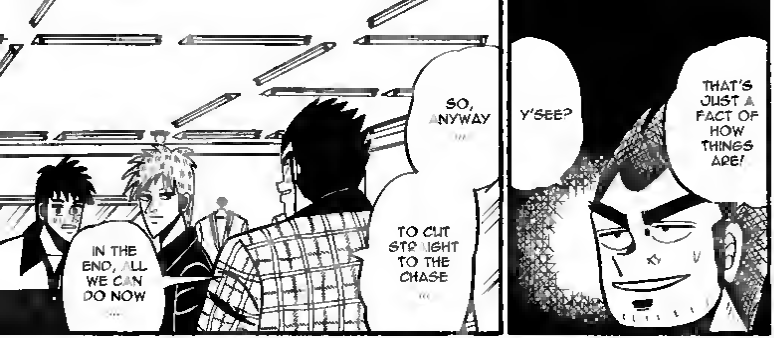
第53話　有り金

NO WAY!!!


HNN-HN-HN
HOW CAN YOU EVEN SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT,, DUDE!!
DO YOU GET WHAT THAT MEANS FOR YOU ?!
I MEAN ... MAN!!
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE SAYING, MAN?!

BUT YOU'VE GOTTA KNOW THAT THERE'S NO TURNIN' BACK AFTER THIS
IT'D BECOME TROUBLESOME TO GET ACCOMPLISHED AFTER THE FACT...
YA GOTTA FOLLOW THROUGH, GET ME?
WORD WILL SPREAD ABOUT IT PRETTY QUICK.
AL-THOUGH
I DON'T HAVE A PROBLEM WITH IT
DON'T WORRY, IT'S ALL RIGHT
HUH ...?
SINCE THIS'S A HUGE BET WE'DE MAKIN', HERE...

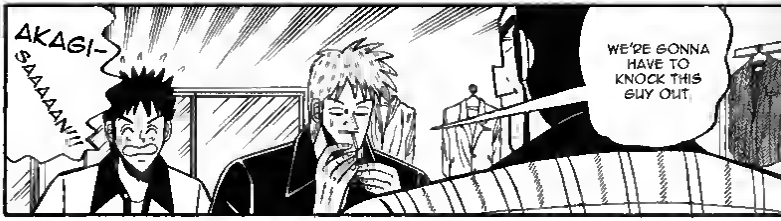
NO ONE KNOWS WHAT HAPPENED TO THE FAKE AKAGI AND THAT URABE GUY...
THE RUMOR DOESN'T REALLY GO VERY IN-DEPTH ABOUT THAT, ANSAN.
IT'S REALLY TOO BAD FOR YOU, BUT....
THAT INTIMIDATION OF YOURS....
...WON'T WORK WHEN I'VE GOTCHA ALL FIGURED OUT!
HEH-HEH-HEH...
IT'S AN EMPTY THREAT, MAN! EMPTY!
YOU CAN'T FOLLOW THROUGH WITH THESE BLOODY BETS YOU MAKE!
FIRST OF ALL, EVEN IF YOU WANTED TO HAVE A DEATH-MATCH OF THAT LEVEL...
THERE AIN'T A MAHJONG PARLOR AROUND THAT'D ALLOW SUCH A THING!

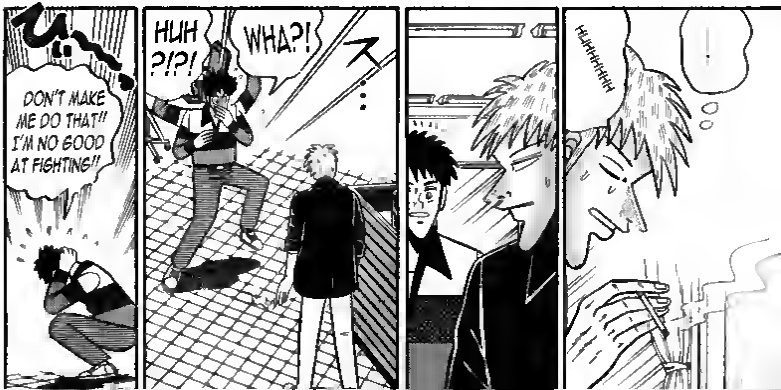

IN THE END, ALL WE CAN DO NOW ...
SO, ANYWAY ...
TO CUT STRAIGHT TO THE CHASE ...
Y'SEE?
THAT'S JUST A FACT OF HOW THINGS ARE!

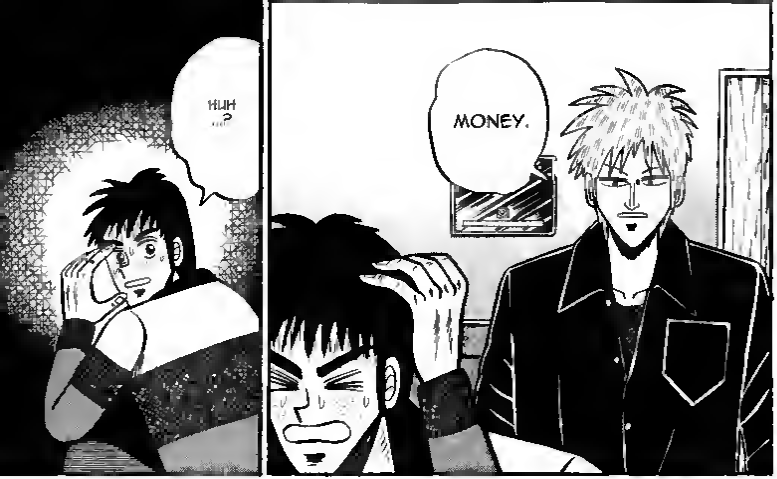
...IS BET OUR MONEY!

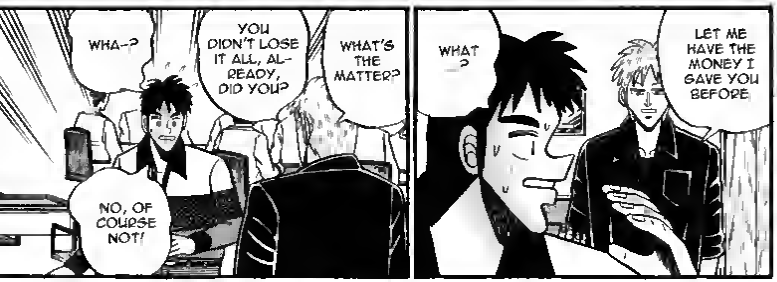
OR ELSE ...
...AGAINST ALL'A MINE! A WINNER-TAKES-ALL GAMBLE!
SO NOW, WE'LL WAGER THAT MONEY...
IF THAT'S HOW IT IS, YOU'RE SURE TO HAVE A LOT MORE ON YA!
THAT OSAMU KID OVER THERE...
...GOT A PRETTY BIG SUM O' CASH FROM YOU, DIDN'T HE?
THAT MUCH IS DECIDED, ALREADY!

IT'LL BE TWO AGAINST ONE! YOU'VE GOT THE ODDS!
OSAMU
RIGHT HERE, IN FRONT'A EVERY-ONE?
WOULDJA LIKE IT BETTER IF WE FOUGHT WITH OUR FISTS, INSTEAD?


AKAGI-
SAAAAAN!!
WE'RE GONNA HAVE TO KNOCK THIS GUY OUT.


DON'T MAKE ME DO THAT!! I'M NO GOOD AT FIGHTING!!
HUH ?!?!
WHA?!
HUHHHHHH


HUH ...?
MONEY.


WHA-?
YOU DIDN'T LOSE IT ALL, ALREADY, DID YOU?
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
NO, OF COURSE NOT!
WHAT ...?
LET ME HAVE THE MONEY I GAVE YOU BEFORE.

BUT .. BUT I THOUGHT YOU HAD A LOT OF MONEY!!
YOU'RE KIDDING!!
LIKE, 2 MILLION!!
NOPE.
DON'T YOU HAVE MONEY OF YOUR OWN FROM THE OTHER NIGHT, AKAGI-SAN?
BUT ...
I DON'T MIND GIVING IT BACK TO YOU AT ALL...

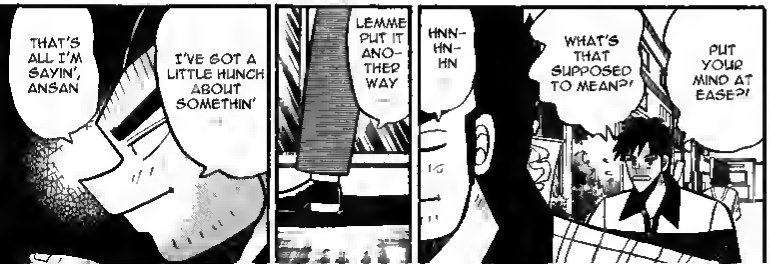
PAPER ...?
IT'S JUST A BUNCH OF PAPER.
I THREW IT ALL OUT PLAYING GAMES OVER A FEW DAYS...
DIDN'T KAWADA-KUMICHOU GIVE YOU THE MONEY AFTER THAT MATCH LAST WEEK?!
COURSE HE DID.
NO WAY...!
EVEN IF IT'S 3 OR 4 MILLION YEN OVER A FEW DAYS, IT'S STILL JUST PAPER?!
PAPER ...?!
I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW HE COULD LOSE MONEY GAMBLING...!
AND MOREOVER, WHAT KIND OF GAMES WERE HE PLAYING TO LOSE THAT KIND OF MONEY SO FAST?!
AKAGI-SAN!

SO I'M BETTING EVERYTHING I HAVE AT ONCE...
...AND LET'S FINISH IT IN ONE HANCHAN SESSION.
I DON'T WANT TO BE BORED WITH THIS GAME, HERE...
HNN-HN-HN...
ANY PROBLEM WITH THAT?
チラッ
URGH...!

HNN-HN-HN...
QUITE A LOT OF MONEY, YOU'VE GOT HERE.
...WINNIN' TIME AND TIME AGAIN TO GET ALL THE MONEY THAT I POSSIBLY COULD, BUT...
I BUILT UP MONEY...
I'VE BEEN PUSHIN' MYSELF TO MY LIMIT
THESE LAST FEW DAYS, TO PREPARE FOR MY MATCH WITH YOU, ANSAN.
IT WON'T WORK IF I HAVE TO PAY ANY MORE THAN THIS.
RIGHT NOW, I'M GONNA HAVE TO GO INTO THE GAME WITH JUST 300 GRAND TO MY NAME.
EVEN SO, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE GOT WAY MORE THAN I COULD'VE GOTTEN

SO I GUESS NOW WE NEED TO FIND A TABLE WITH TWO SEATS OPEN
AKAGI-HAN...
AS LONG AS WE'RE BOTH BETTING EVERYTHING WE HAVE TO BET...
IT'S NOT ABOUT HOW MUCH MONEY WE'RE EACH PUTTING DOWN FOR THE GAME
WE'VE GOT THE SAME AMOUNT OF RISK.
IT WILL DO.
YEAH, THAT'S FINE...
HMMM?
WHY DON'T WE GO FIND ANOTHER PLACE TO PLAY... JUST TO MAKE SURE.
?
カチ
HNN-HN-HN...
HUH?
SOMETHING SMELLS A BIT FISHY, IN HERE...

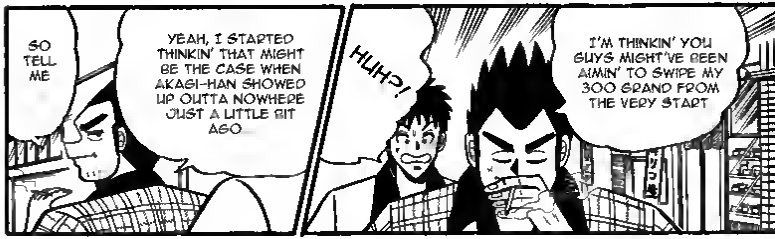
I'D'VE EXPECTED AT LEAST A LITTLE RESISTANCE FROM YOU WITH THE UNBALANCED BET...
IT'S A BIT UNORTHODOX TO SUSPECT, BUT THIS'LL PUT MY MIND AT EASE
YOU WERE BEIN' A BIT TOO GENEROUS FOR YOUR OWN GOOD, BACK THERE
SO EVEN THOUGH IT'S NOT A HUGE SUSPICION...
AT THE END OF THE DAY, I'M STILL A MAHJONG PRO, NO MATTER WHERE I AM


THAT'S ALL I'M SAYIN', ANSAN
I'VE GOT A LITTLE HUNCH ABOUT SOMETHIN'
LEMME PUT IT ANO-THER WAY...
HNN-HN-HN
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?!
PUT YOUR MIND AT EASE?!

HNN-HN-HN
SORRY 'BOUT THIS

HUH?

AND YOU GUYS'VE GOT QUITE THE STOCK OF CASH
I'VE BEEN LISTENING TO ALL'A THE RUMORS ABOUT AKAGI-HAN THAT'VE BEEN CIRCLING 'ROUND LATELY
THAT'S THE IDEA
A HUNCH ABOUT SOMETHING?


SO TELL ME
YEAH, I STARTED THINKIN' THAT MIGHT BE THE CASE WHEN AKAGI-HAN SHOWED UP OUTTA NOWHERE JUST A LITTLE BIT AGO...
HUH?!
I'M THINKIN' YOU GUYS MIGHT'VE BEEN AIMIN' TO SWIPE MY 300 GRAND FROM THE VERY START

HOW COULD WE EVEN DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT?!
ENOUGH WITH YOUR LAME ASSUMP-TIONS, ALREADY!!
HEY!
WHAT TRICK WERE YOU TRYIN' TO PULL ON ME, HMM?

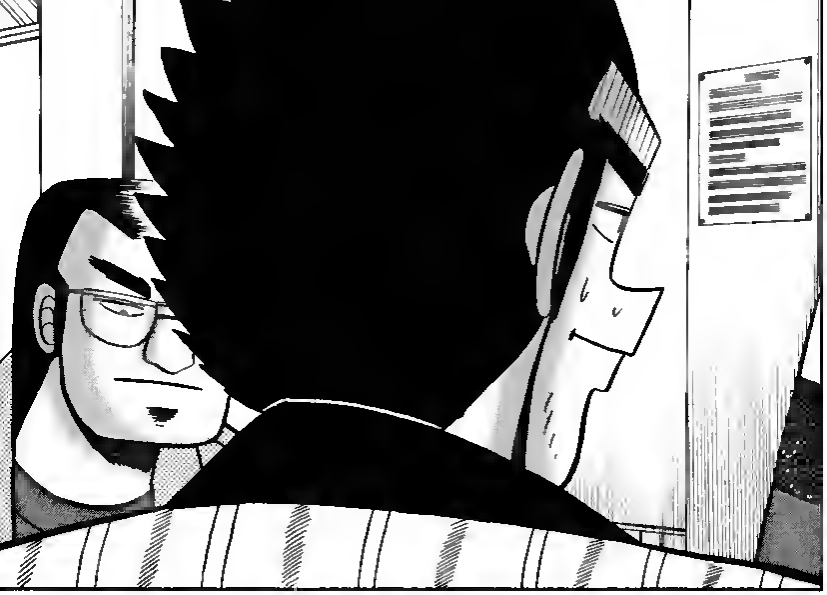
I FIGURED YOU'D SAY SOMETHIN' LIKE THAT
YEAH
HNN-HN-HN
AKAGI-SAN WOULD NEVER DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT!!!

IF I HAVE THE TINIEST AMOUNT O' SUSPICION THAT WE CAN DO SOMETHIN' ABOUT BEFORE WE START, THEN WE GOTTA DO IT
THIS'S BIG MONEY ON THE LINE, HERE
IT'S SMALL BUT
BUT, YA SEE
I DON'T THINK AKAGI COULDA DONE THAT VERY EASILY, EITHER.

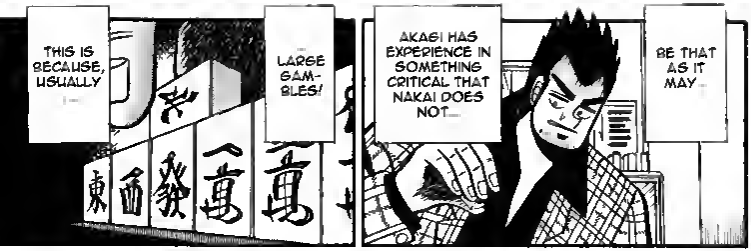
'KAY, THEN
IT'S SOMETHIN' THAT MAHJONG PROS LIKE US HAVE TO DO TO ENSURE GOOD GAME.
BUT AKAGI-HAN SHOULD HAVE SOME IDEA OF WHERE I'M COMIN' FROM.
I WOULDN'T'VE EXPECTED YOU TO GET WHAT I'M SAYIN', OSAMU-HAN...
WELL

AKAGI-HAN...
THIS PART O' TOWN IS CHOCK FULL O' MAH-JONG PARLORS
IT'S MY PREFERRED SPOT FOR PLAYIN'
ANYWHERE IS FINE FOR US NOW...
YOU CAN TAKE YOUR PICK
IT'S UP TO YOU
HMM-HM-HM
AKAGI
SAW 3 MAHJONG PARLORS IN HIS IMMEDIATE VICINITY
HE PICKED ONE OF THEM, AND PROMPTLY CLIMBED UP ITS STEPS.
OSAMU AND NAKAI FOLLOWED BEHIND HIM.

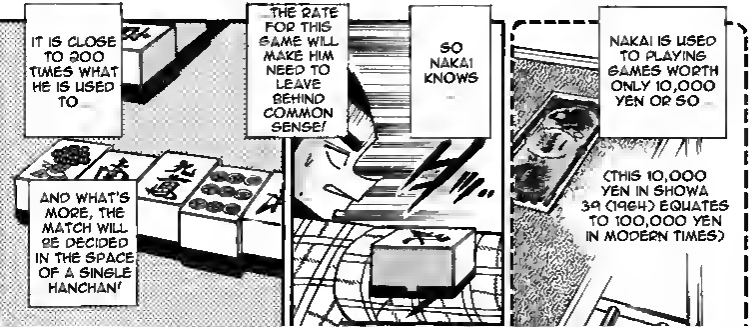
INSIDE ...
IT WAS A RATHER INACTIVE DAY
ONLY ONE TABLE HAD PEOPLE PLAYING
THE BATTLE HAD BEGUN
THIS MADE FOR 4 PEOPLE, A COMPLETE TABLE.
TWO YOUNG MEN ENTERED THE PARLOR, JOINING AKAGI AND NAKAI AT THEIR TABLE.
AKAGI AND THE OTHERS WAITED AT A TABLE FOR A SHORT WHILE...
AND AFTER 5 MINUTES ...

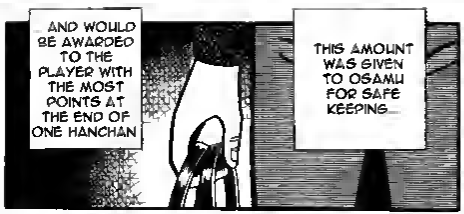


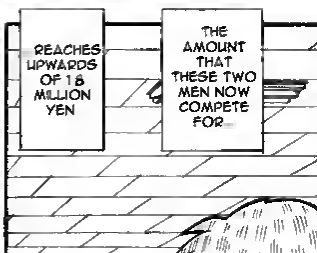
AKAGI VERSUS NAKAI


THIS IS BECAUSE, USUALLY...
...LARGE GAMBLES!

AKAGI HAS EXPERIENCE IN SOMETHING CRITICAL THAT NAKAI DOES NOT...
BE THAT AS IT MAY...

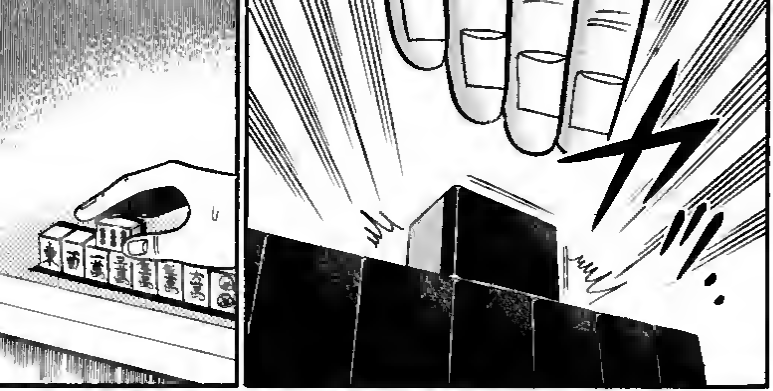

IT IS CLOSE TO 200 TIMES WHAT HE IS USED TO...
AND WHAT'S MORE, THE MATCH WILL BE DECIDED IN THE SPACE OF A SINGLE HANCHAN!
THE RATE FOR THIS GAME WILL MAKE HIM NEED TO LEAVE BEHIND COMMON SENSE!
SO NAKAI KNOWS...
NAKAI IS USED TO PLAYING GAMES WORTH ONLY 10,000 YEN OR SO...
(THIS 10,000 YEN IN SHOWA 39 (1964) EQUATES TO 100,000 YEN IN MODERN TIMES)

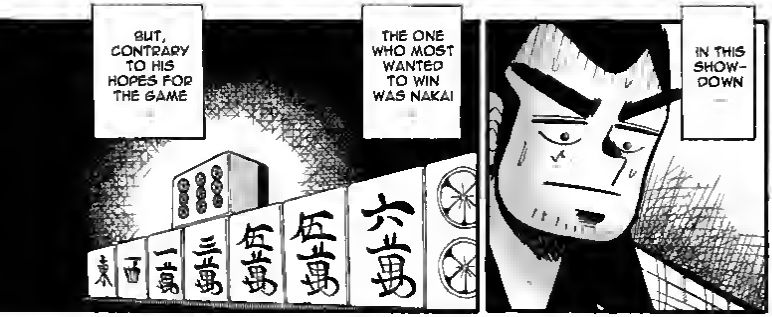

...AND WOULD BE AWARDED TO THE PLAYER WITH THE MOST POINTS AT THE END OF ONE HANCHAN
THIS AMOUNT WAS GIVEN TO OSAMU FOR SAFE KEEPING...


REACHES UPWARDS OF 18 MILLION YEN
THE AMOUNT THAT THESE TWO MEN NOW COMPETE FOR...

WITH NOTHING TO THEIR NAME!
EITHER NAKAI OR AKAGI COULD WALK OUT

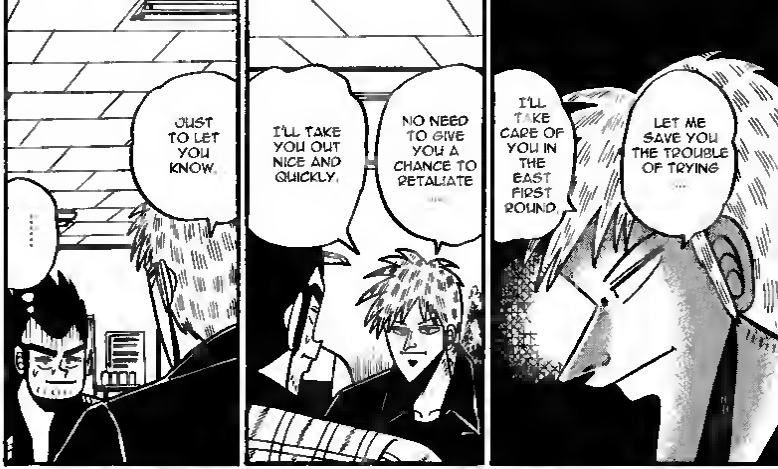
THIS NERVOUSNESS IS ACTUALLY VERY REASONABLE!
AND IF ONE THINKS ABOUT THE SITUATION HE IS IN...
MORE OR LESS AMOUNTED TO NAKAI'S WAY OF COPING WITH HIS NERVOUSNESS!
THE CHANGE OF LOCATION AND OTHER SUCH THINGS...
THIS 300,000 YEN THAT HE GATHERED BY HIMSELF...
NAKAI IS STICKING HIS NECK OUT FAR FOR THIS MATCH
THAT MONEY WOULD NOT COME BACK TO HIM SO EASILY...
IF HE WERE TO LOSE NOW...
THROUGH HIS PRIMARY INCOME OF PLAYING MAHJONG...
GRADUALLY STORED UP, BIT BY BIT...
WAS, IN FACT, OVER THE COURSE OF 1 OR 2 YEARS...
IT TRULY WAS HIS LIFELONG TREASURE.
麻雀
なかえ
一番館

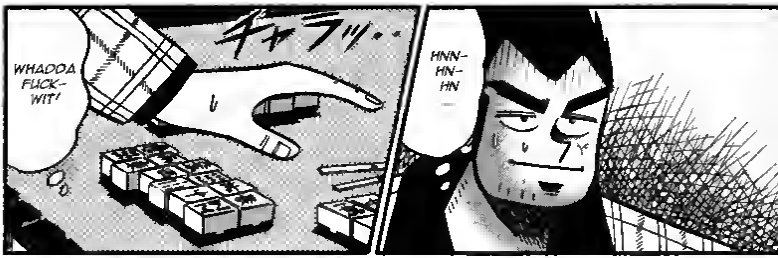



BUT, CONTRARY TO HIS HOPES FOR THE GAME
THE ONE WHO MOST WANTED TO WIN WAS NAKAI
IN THIS SHOW-DOWN

AND WHILE THAT WAS GOING ON...
...BUT EVEN SO, HIS HAND ENDED UP WITH MANY TILES THAT IT COULD NOT USE.
HE HAD SWITCHED OUT 8 TILES OVER THE COURSE OF THE GAME...
AND HIS OVERALL HAND WAS VERY BAD.
ALL OF THE TILES HE DREW ...
HE WAS TRULY IN A DES-PERATE SITUATION.

HNN-HN...
HUH?
OH, YOU WILL, NOW...?
AKAGI-HAN...
HMM-HM-HM...
BUT DON'T YOU WORRY... I'LL GET IT BACK. THIS FIRST ROUND MEANS NOTHIN'!
LOOKS LIKE I GOT THE BAD END OF THE FLOW TO START, HUH?
WELL, NOW...
3000 FROM EVERY-ONE
THE FIRST DEALER, AKAGI, PUT A HAND TOGETHER
TSUMO.
KH...


JUST TO LET YOU KNOW.
I'LL TAKE YOU OUT NICE AND QUICKLY.
NO NEED TO GIVE YOU A CHANCE TO RETALIATE
I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU IN THE EAST FIRST ROUND.
LET ME SAVE YOU THE TROUBLE OF TRYING

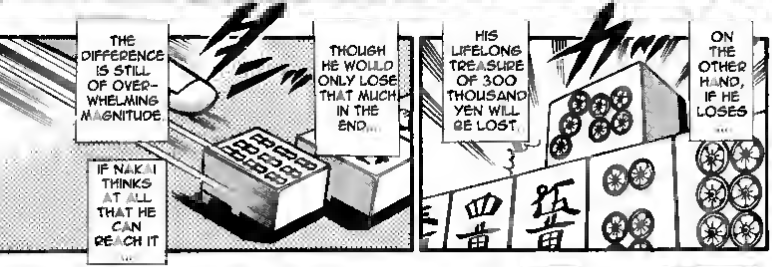

WHADDA FUCK-WIT!
HNN-HN-HN

IF WORST COMES TO WORST... I'VE STILL GOT MY BACKUP PLAN!
YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THE LAST O' ME, YET
AKAGI-HAN

CHAPTER 54 - COORDINATION

第54話 連携

ざわ..
ざわ..


THE DIFFERENCE IS STILL OF OVERWHELMING MAGNITUDE
IF NAKAI THINKS AT ALL THAT HE CAN REACH IT
THOUGH HE WOULD ONLY LOSE THAT MUCH IN THE END...

HIS LIFELONG TREASURE OF 300 THOUSAND YEN WILL BE LOST.
ON THE OTHER HAND, IF HE LOSES

HMM-HM-HM
HUH ?!
TSUMO
HOWEVER
THEN HE MUST WIN HE CANNOT ALLOW HIMSELF TO LOSE

...NAKAI WANTS SADLY TO WIN
IN THIS BATTLE
AKAGI VS NAKAI
...AS WELL AS THE 1.8 MILLION YEN WAGERED ON THIS MATCH
HE WOULD BE KNOWN AS THE MAN WHO DEFEATED AKAGI SHIGERU
HE WOULD GET EVERYTHING
IF HE COULD MANAGE TO WIN AT THIS TIME

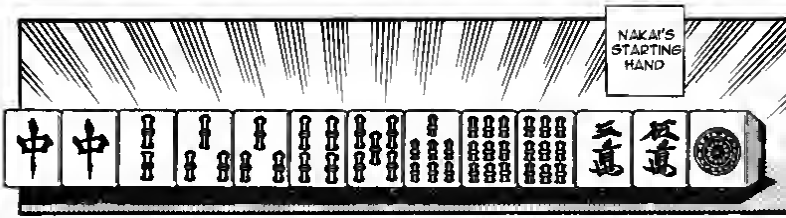
TANYAO, MENZEN TSUMO, WITH 1 DORA.
3100 FROM EVERY-ONE
THINGS CONTINUED TO DEFY NAKAI'S EXPEC-TATIONS.
FROM THE VERY START OF THE MATCH, AKAGI WAS ON A WINNING STREAK.
NAKAI HAD REACHED HIS WIT'S END...
EVEN NOW, HIS POINTS MERELY CONTINUED TO DE-CREASE.

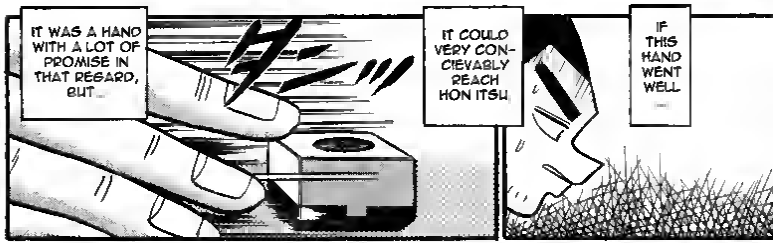
WHAT THE FUCK IS GOIN' ON...?!
SHIT
IN THIS STAGE OF THE BATTLE ...
THERE WAS MOST CERTAINLY A WAY FOR HIM TO MAKE A COMEBACK, STILL.
THAT TOOK UP THE VAST MAJORITY OF HIS THOUGHTS AT THE TIME.
OF COURSE ...

IN ORDER TO WIN, HE HAD TO PREPARE A STRATEGY...
HE HAD TO BE READY FOR ANYTHING.
90% ...
NO, EVEN CLOSER TO 100% ...
HE WAS ENTIRELY FOCUSED ON HOW TO BRING THE MATCH AROUND BACK TO HIS FAVOR.
BUT STILL ...
IT WAS TOO SOON FOR THERE TO EMERGE A CHANCE FOR HIM...
FOR AKAGI HAD ALREADY WON!
LINEXPECTEDLY QUICKLY ...
SHIT ...!
RON.
HUH ...?!
THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE ...!!
IT'S ONLY THE FOURTH TURN!!

GETTIN' ALL WORKED UP OVER IT WON'T DO ME ANY GOOD
I REALLY CAN'T BELIEVE IT, BUT
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!!!
IT'S A DEALER MANGAN 12,600-
TANYAO, SAN SHOKU, WITH ONE DORA
I'VE ONLY GOT 8600 POINTS LEFT
THE WAY THINGS ARE
BUT NOW AIN'T THE TIME TO COMPLAIN
I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO FIGHT BACK AT ALL
IT'S STILL THE EAST FIRST ROUND, AND HE'S STILL THE DEALER
IT'S UNBELIEV-ABLE, BUT
WAS A SAN SHOKU ?!
THAT INCON-CIEVABLY FAST HAND
WHAT'S THIS
URGH !!!
WHAT'S THIS WHAT'S THIS WHAT IS THIS?!

EAST FIRST ROUND, 3RD HONBA
AND NOW, THE NEXT SET...
...IS GET THAT DEALER SPOT AWAY FROM 'IM!
INSTEAD, WHAT I NEED TO DO FOR THE MOMENT...


NAKAI'S STARTING HAND


IT WAS A HAND WITH A LOT OF PROMISE IN THAT REGARD, BUT...
IT COULD VERY CONCIEVABLY REACH HON ITSU.
IF THIS HAND WENT WELL...

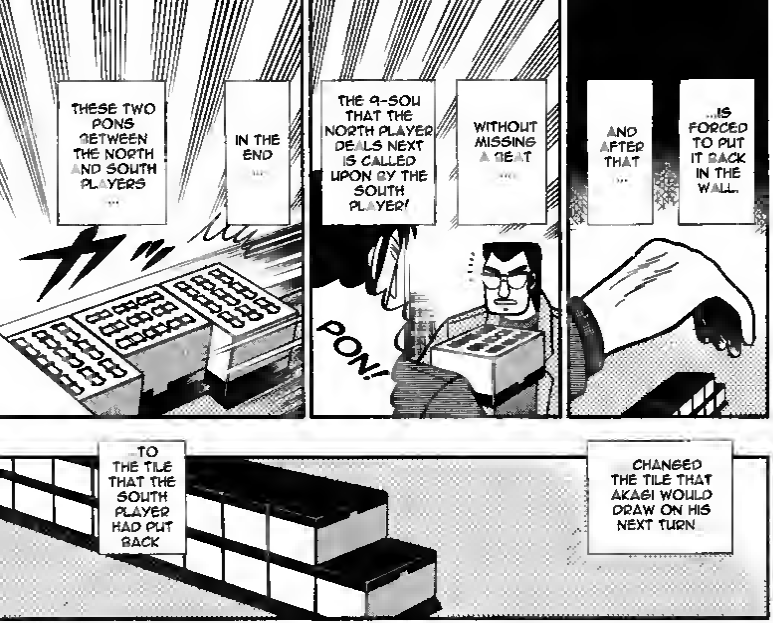
HE COULD NOT ALLOW HIMSELF TO HOPE FOR SUCH LUXURIES.
AT SUCH A DESPARATE MOMENT...
CHI!

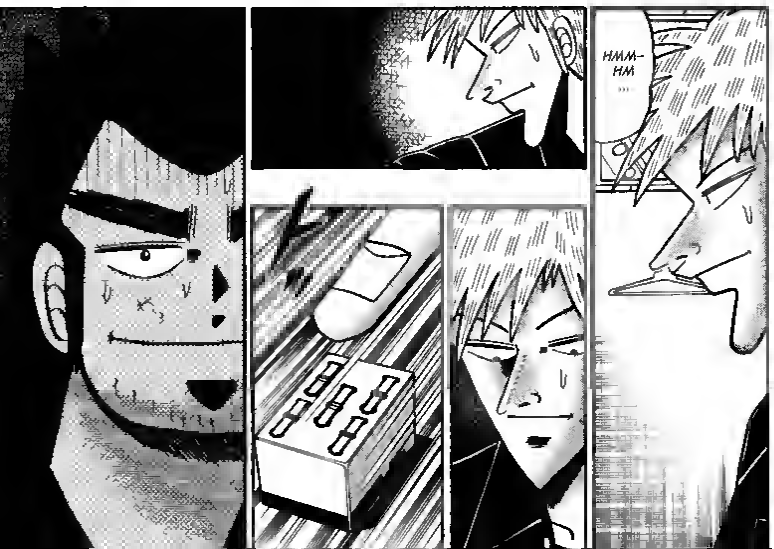
PON!
HE CALLS ON THE TILES OF THOSE AROUND HIM.
HIS HAND BECOMES FAR CHEAPER, BUT ...
IN ORDER TO STOP THE DEALER, AKAGI, FROM GETTING ANOTHER HONR...
HE MAKES THE QUICK CALL...
...AND ACCEPTS THIS CHEAP HAND.
SOMEHOW OR ANOTHER, NAKAI SCRAPES TOGETHER A WIN.
HE TAKES THIS 1900 POINTS.
...AND PUTS A STOP TO AKAGI'S DEALERSHIP.
PON!

THIS GIVES HIM HIS CHANCE!
NAKAI'S DEALER TURN
WHICH BRINGS US TO THE EAST 3RD ROUND
NAKAI WINS ONCE AGAIN
IN THE NEXT ROUND, THE EAST 2ND...
AND ONCE HE DOES SO...
PON!
UPON SEEING HIS RIICHI, THE NORTH PLAYER REACTS BY CALLING
NAKAI IS THE FIRST PLAYER TO CALL RIICHI
RIICHI!
PUTS HIS TILE BACK IN THE WALL.
THE SOUTH PLAYER, WHO HAD ALREADY TAKEN HIS DRAW...

AND SOON AFTER
DRAWING THAT TILE
TSUMO!!
I GOT ANOTHER ONE!
RIICHI, PINFU, MENZEN TSUMO!
AND NOW, THE URA DORA...!
K'AHHHHHHH!
DIDN'T GET ANY OF 'EM
HOWEVER, THIS GIVES NAKAI HIS THIRD STRAIGHT WIN!
HE GATHERS HIS STRENGTH!

NOT AT ALL INTIMIDATED BY AKAGI'S PREEMPTIVE RIICHI...
RIICHI!
AND THEN, IN THE NEXT ROUND ...
FIGHTS RIGHT BACK!
NAKAI ...
THE SOUTH PLAYER, WHO HAD ALREADY TAKEN HIS DRAW...
AND ONCE AGAIN ...
PON!
...IS ONCE AGAIN CALLED BY THE NORTH PLAYER!
AND THIS TILE ...
HIS HATSU OVERFLOWS FOR HIS RIICHI...
RIICHI!


THESE TWO PONS BETWEEN THE NORTH AND SOUTH PLAYERS ...
IN THE END ...
THE 9-SOU THAT THE NORTH PLAYER DEALS NEXT IS CALLED UPON BY THE SOUTH PLAYER!
WITHOUT MISSING A BEAT ...
AND AFTER THAT ...
...IS FORCED TO PUT IT BACK IN THE WALL.
PON!
...TO THE TILE THAT THE SOUTH PLAYER HAD PUT BACK
CHANGED THE TILE THAT AKAGI WOULD DRAW ON HIS NEXT TURN

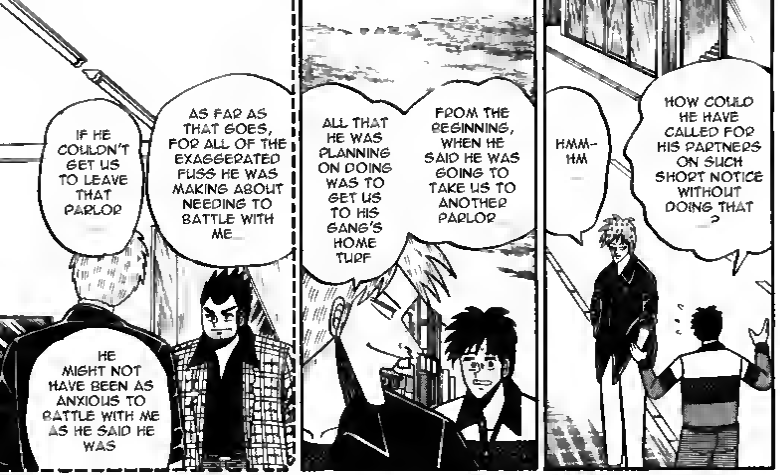

HMM-HM ...

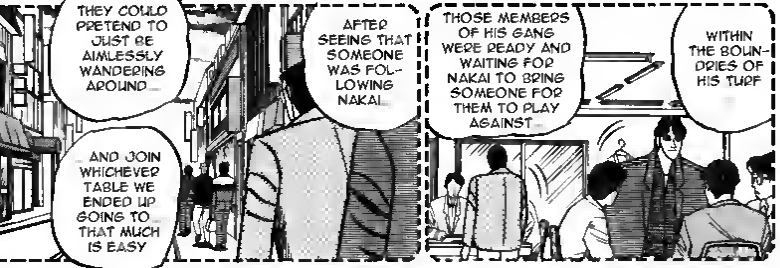
RON!
THAT'LL BE 19,300 POINTS!
URGH
KH
HMM-HM-HM
HUH?

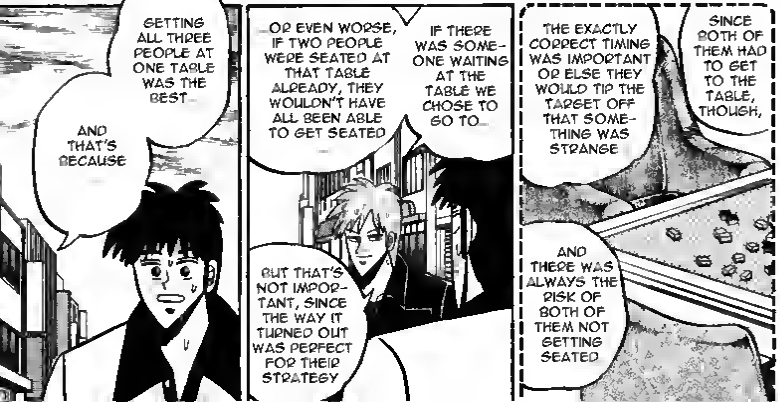
WHERE D'YOU THINK YOU'RE GOIN'?!
HMM-HM-HM...
HOLD ON A SEC!
WH... WHAT'S GOIN' ON ?!
OSAMU
SMOKES ...?!
I NEED TO GO BUY SOME MORE
I'M ALL OUT OF SMOKES
HEY!
JUS... JUST WAIT A MINUTE ..! AKAGI-SAN...!!
WHAA AAAA AAAA AAAA AAAA AAAA AAAA AAAT ?!
YOU'RE GOING TO BE TAKING MY PLACE.
HUH ...?
YOU FUCKIN' MORON!
AND LEAVE THE MONEY HERE!!
GO AND GET 'IM BACK HERE, NOW!!
THIS AIN'T SOME JOKE, MOTHER-FUCKER!

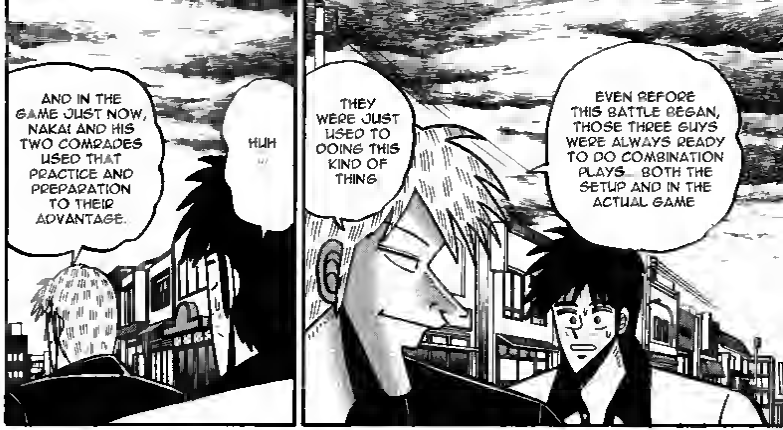
HE MADE ME LEAVE THE MONEY BACK THERE, TOO!
I MEAN, IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE GONNA BE GONE, FOREVER
MAN, WHAT'S UP WITH THAT GUY?
.....
HMM-HM-HM
HMM-HM-HM
SER-IOUSLY!
I WOULDN'T JUST RUN OFF WITH THE MONEY LIKE SOME KIND OF HOOLIGAN!!
YEAH
HE JUST HAD TO FEEL AS SECURE AS HE COULD HE'S QUITE THE SHREWD LITTLE GUY
WELL, THAT'S JUST HOW HE IS
IT SEEMS LIKE YOU'RE MIS-INTERPRETING WHAT'S GOING ON, AGAIN, OSAMU
HUH?
HE WAS GETTING A LOT OF WINS, ALL OF A SUDDEN!
OH, I MEAN IN THE ACTUAL MAHJONG GAME!
HMM-HM-HM
HMM?
WELL, ANY-WAY
LAYING IT ON?
HE WAS REALLY LAYING IT ON, WASN'T HE?
THAT GUY

HOW AM I MISIN-TERPRETING ...?
HMM-HM ...
IT'S NOT THAT HE JUST STARTED "LAYING IT ON" OUT OF NOWHERE ...
WHAT HE WAS DOING JUST NOW ...
INVOLVED SOME PRETTY OBVIOUS CHEATING, WOULDN'T YOU AGREE?
CHEATING ...?!
YEP
THE OTHER TWO PEOPLE AT THE TABLE WITH US...
NAKAI KNEW THEM BEFORE ALL OF THIS BEGAN.
YOU COULD SAY THAT THEY'RE HIS PARTNERS
えび家
HUH?!
.....
B-BUT...
WHEN NAKAI TOOK US TO THAT MAHJONG PARLOR JUST A BIT AGO...
...HE DION'T STOP TO USE THE PHONE FOR EVEN A SECOND!

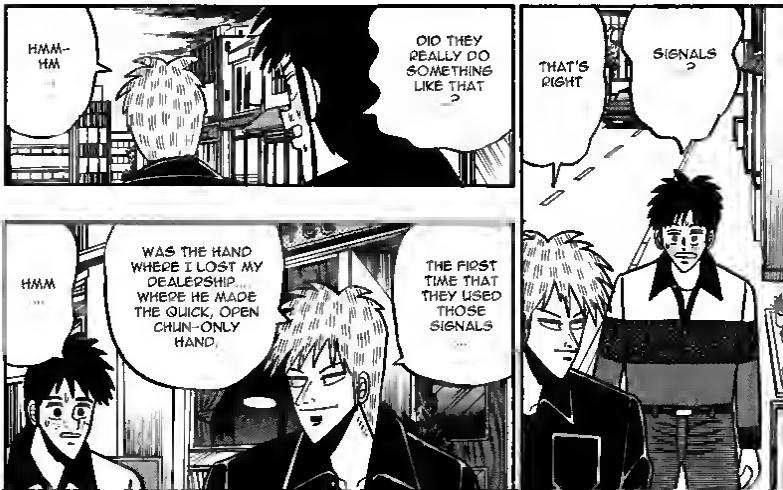

IF HE COULDN'T GET US TO LEAVE THAT PARLOR
AS FAR AS THAT GOES, FOR ALL OF THE EXAGGERATED FUSS HE WAS MAKING ABOUT NEEDING TO BATTLE WITH ME...
HE MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN AS ANXIOUS TO BATTLE WITH ME AS HE SAID HE WAS
ALL THAT HE WAS PLANNING ON DOING WAS TO GET US TO HIS GANG'S HOME TURF
FROM THE BEGINNING, WHEN HE SAID HE WAS GOING TO TAKE US TO ANOTHER PARLOR
HMM-HM...
HOW COULD HE HAVE CALLED FOR HIS PARTNERS ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE WITHOUT DOING THAT...?


THEY COULD PRETEND TO JUST BE AIMLESSLY WANDERING AROUND...
...AND JOIN WHICHEVER TABLE WE ENDED UP GOING TO... THAT MUCH IS EASY
AFTER SEEING THAT SOMEONE WAS FOLLOWING NAKAI...
THOSE MEMBERS OF HIS GANG WERE READY AND WAITING FOR NAKAI TO BRING SOMEONE FOR THEM TO PLAY AGAINST...
WITHIN THE BOUNDRIES OF HIS TURF

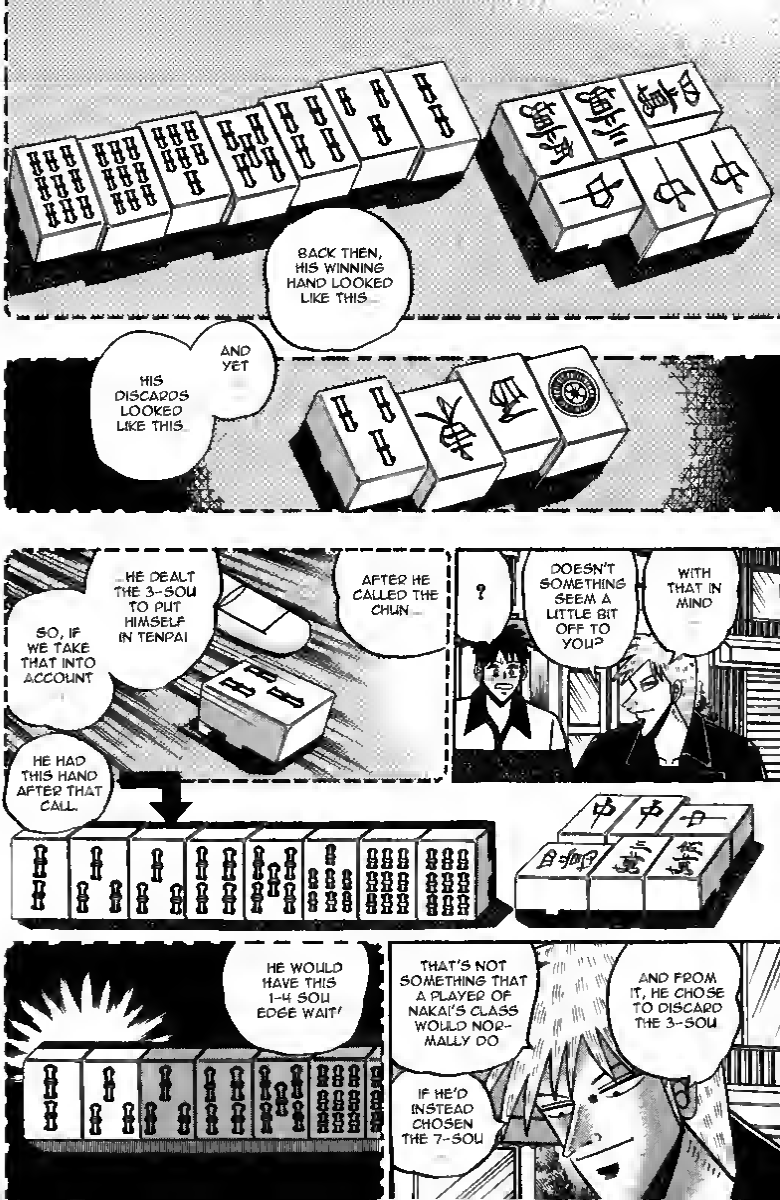

GETTING ALL THREE PEOPLE AT ONE TABLE WAS THE BEST...
AND THAT'S BECAUSE
...OR EVEN WORSE, IF TWO PEOPLE WERE SEATED AT THAT TABLE ALREADY, THEY WOULDN'T HAVE ALL BEEN ABLE TO GET SEATED...
IF THERE WAS SOMEONE WAITING AT THE TABLE WE CHOSE TO GO TO...
BUT THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT, SINCE THE WAY IT TURNED OUT WAS PERFECT FOR THEIR STRATEGY
THE EXACTLY CORRECT TIMING WAS IMPORTANT OR ELSE THEY WOULD TIP THE TARGET OFF THAT SOMETHING WAS STRANGE
SINCE BOTH OF THEM HAD TO GET TO THE TABLE, THOUGH,
AND THERE WAS ALWAYS THE RISK OF BOTH OF THEM NOT GETTING SEATED

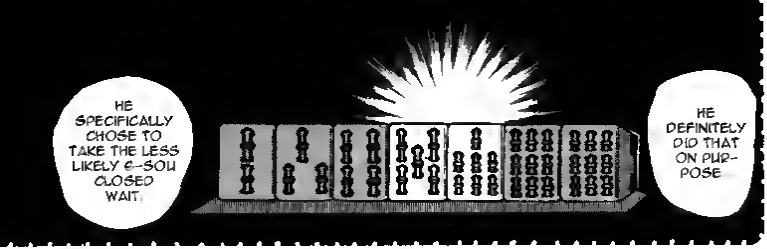

EVEN BEFORE THIS BATTLE BEGAN, THOSE THREE GUYS WERE ALWAYS READY TO DO COMBINATION PLAYS... BOTH THE SETUP AND IN THE ACTUAL GAME
THEY WERE JUST USED TO DOING THIS KIND OF THING
HUH ...
AND IN THE GAME JUST NOW, NAKAI AND HIS TWO COMRADES USED THAT PRACTICE AND PREPARATION TO THEIR ADVANTAGE.

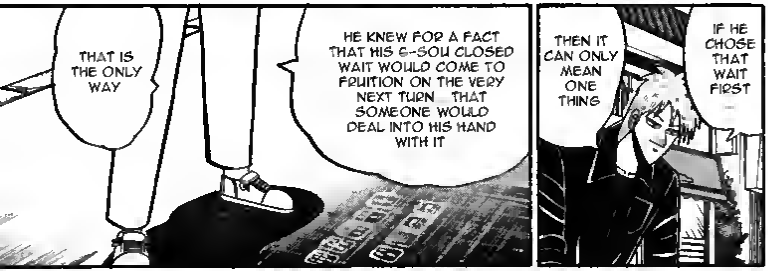
THEY WERE USING SIGNALS.
PARTNERS AS SKILLED AS NAKAI AND HIS FRIENDS CAN USE NONVERBAL SIGNALS TO COMMUNICATE TO EACH OTHER

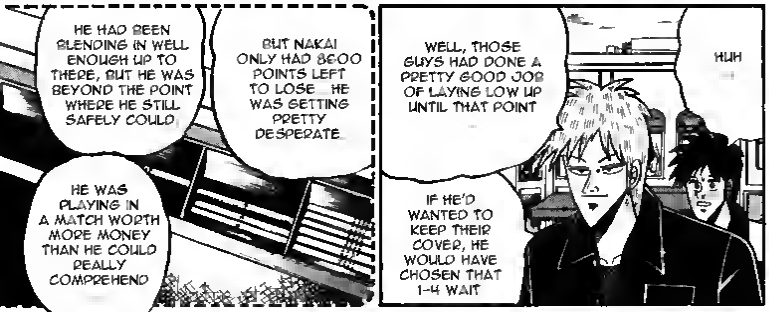

SIGNALS ?
THAT'S RIGHT
DID THEY REALLY DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT ?
HMM-HM ...
THE FIRST TIME THAT THEY USED THOSE SIGNALS ...
WAS THE HAND WHERE I LOST MY DEALERSHIP... WHERE HE MADE THE QUICK, OPEN CHUN-ONLY HAND.
HMM ...

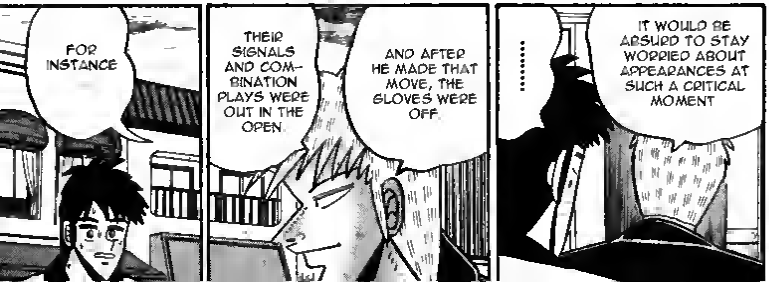
I SEE...
IT DEFINITELY INVOKES THE THOUGHT THAT THERE MIGHT BE SOME CHEATING GOING ON...
WHEN YOU SEE SOME-THING LIKE THAT...
GETTING THAT FAR IS EASY ENOUGH.
WHERE YOU'D BEEN GETTING DEALER WIN AFTER DEALER WIN FOR 3 STRAIGHT HANDS...
GIVEN THE SETTING, AKAGI-SAN...
THEY'D OBVIOUSLY WANT TO GET YOUR DEALER POSITION AWAY FROM YOU, SO
IT DID SEEM LIKE THOSE THREE WERE CALLING OFF OF EACH OTHER AN AWFUL LOT
N... NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT...
BUT STILL...
WHAT I WAS TALKING ABOUT
LOOKS LIKE YOU DON'T QUITE HAVE IT, YET
DIDN'T HAVE TO DO WITH THAT TACTIC
WATCH
...YOU CAN'T SAY FOR SURE IF THEY'RE CHEATING OR NOT!
ALL I'M SAYING IS THAT JUST WITH THAT PRETTY ORDI-NARY TACTIC BY ITSELF...
HMM-HM...
THEY MIGHT EVEN HELP EACH OTHER TO GET THERE!
ANYONE WOULD HAVE GONE FOR A CHEAP, QUICK HAND...

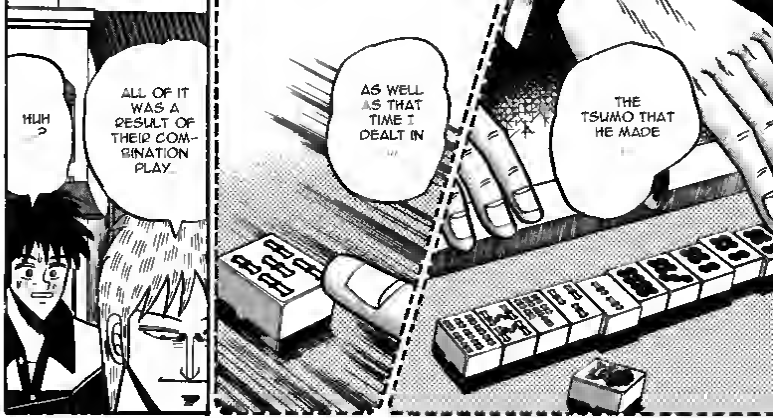

BACK THEN, HIS WINNING HAND LOOKED LIKE THIS...
AND YET
HIS DISCARDS LOOKED LIKE THIS...
...HE DEALT THE 3-SOU TO PUT HIMSELF IN TENPAI
AFTER HE CALLED THE CHUN...
SO, IF WE TAKE THAT INTO ACCOUNT
HE HAD THIS HAND AFTER THAT CALL.
?
DOESN'T SOMETHING SEEM A LITTLE BIT OFF TO YOU?
WITH THAT IN MIND
HE WOULD HAVE THIS 1-4 SOU EDGE WAIT!
THAT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT A PLAYER OF NAKAI'S CLASS WOULD NORMALLY DO
IF HE'D INSTEAD CHOSEN THE 7-SOU
AND FROM IT, HE CHOSE TO DISCARD THE 3-SOU

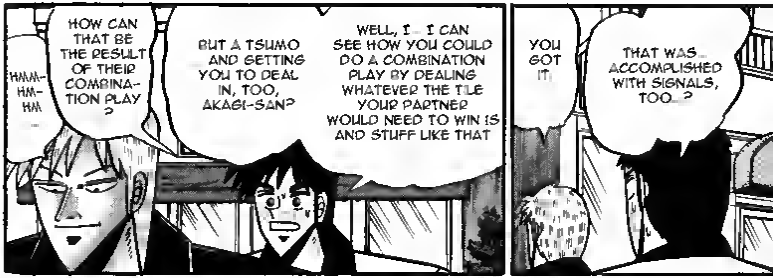

HE SPECIFICALLY CHOSE TO TAKE THE LESS LIKELY 6-SOU CLOSED WAIT.
HE DEFINITELY DID THAT ON PUR-POSE.


THAT IS THE ONLY WAY
HE KNEW FOR A FACT THAT HIS 6-SOU CLOSED WAIT WOULD COME TO FRUITION ON THE VERY NEXT TURN... THAT SOMEONE WOULD DEAL INTO HIS HAND WITH IT
THEN IT CAN ONLY MEAN ONE THING
IF HE CHOSE THAT WAIT FIRST


HE HAD BEEN BLENDING IN WELL ENOUGH UP TO THERE, BUT HE WAS BEYOND THE POINT WHERE HE STILL SAFELY COULD.
BUT NAKAI ONLY HAD 8600 POINTS LEFT TO LOSE... HE WAS GETTING PRETTY DESPERATE.
HE WAS PLAYING IN A MATCH WORTH MORE MONEY THAN HE COULD REALLY COMPREHEND
WELL, THOSE GUYS HAD DONE A PRETTY GOOD JOB OF LAYING LOW UP UNTIL THAT POINT
IF HE'D WANTED TO KEEP THEIR COVER, HE WOULD HAVE CHOSEN THAT 1-4 WAIT
HUH


FOR INSTANCE
THEIR SIGNALS AND COM-BINATION PLAYS WERE OUT IN THE OPEN.
AND AFTER HE MADE THAT MOVE, THE GLOVES WERE OFF.
.....
IT WOULD BE ABSURD TO STAY WORRIED ABOUT APPEARANCES AT SUCH A CRITICAL MOMENT


HUH ?
ALL OF IT WAS A RESULT OF THEIR COMBINATION PLAY
AS WELL AS THAT TIME I DEALT IN
THE TSUMO THAT HE MADE


HAHA-HMM-HA
HOW CAN THAT BE THE RESULT OF THEIR COMBINATION PLAY ?
BUT A TSUMO AND GETTING YOU TO DEAL IN, TOO, AKAGI-SAN?
WELL, I... I CAN SEE HOW YOU COULD DO A COMBINATION PLAY BY DEALING WHATEVER THE TILE YOUR PARTNER WOULD NEED TO WIN IS AND STUFF LIKE THAT
YOU GOT IT!
THAT WAS... ACCOMPLISHED WITH SIGNALS, TOO...?

HUH ...?!
ALL OF THAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED WITH COMBINATION PLAYS...
IT WOULD REQUIRE A BIT OF PRACTICE TO PULL OFF WELL
OH, BUT IT IS.
BUT IT'S VERY SIMPLE
AKAGI VOLUME 6
アカギ6/完
FIN

近代麻雀コミックス
アカギ⑥
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定価はカバーに表示してあります。
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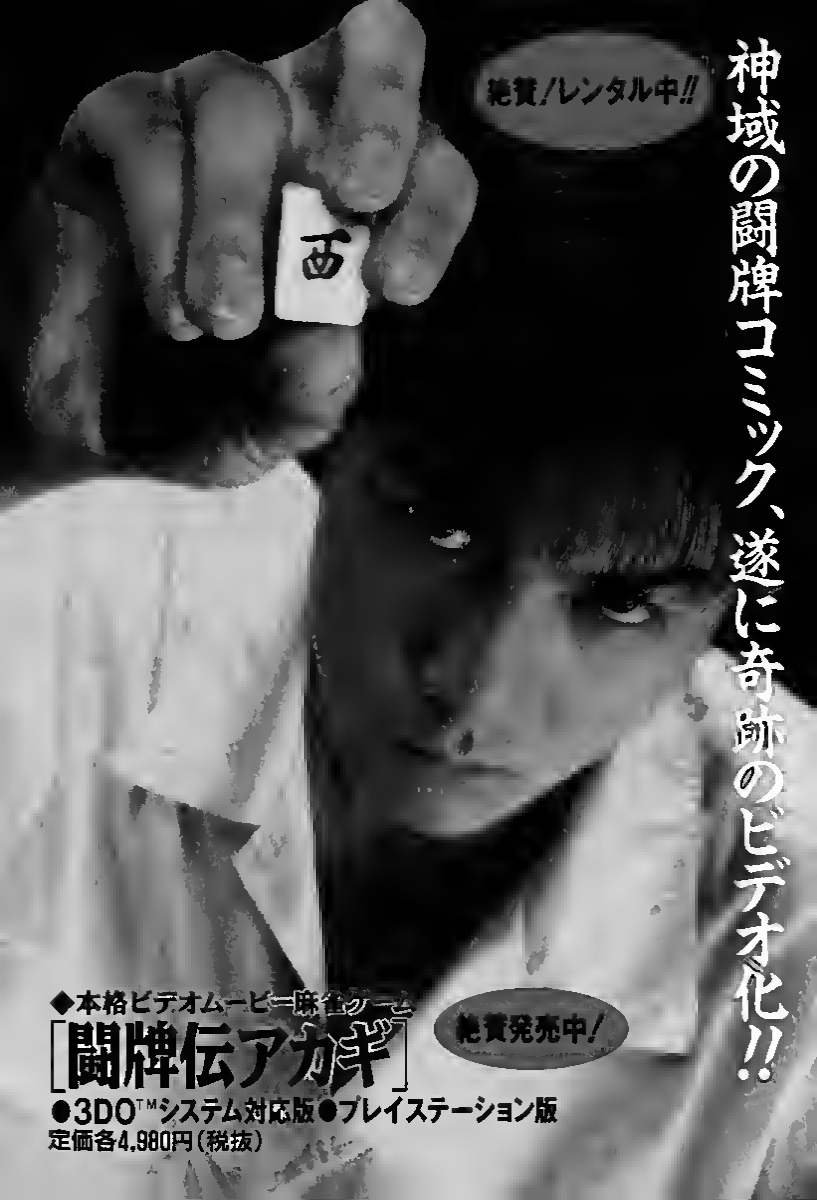
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●監督 奥脇雲宏
●音楽担当 「海猿」

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来たりて
闘牌の
歴史を開く
闇に降り立った天才
アカギ
一人の少年が雀荘に降り立つ。
何も知らないはずの少年に天から
与えられた才能が発動する。その
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今、開かれようとしている。
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